

**“Some Animals Are More Equal than Others” – A Posthumanist  
Reading of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm***

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Tarkastelen pro gradu -tutkielmassani George Orwellin romaania *Animal Farm* (1945) sen eläinhahmojen ja erityisesti lajien välisen tasa-arvon näkökulmasta. Vaikka teoksen päähenkilöt ovat eläimiä ja lähtökohta ihmisten ja eläinten välinen konflikti, kirjaa käsittelevä kritiikki ja tutkimus on lähes poikkeuksetta keskittynyt sen sisältämään poliittiseen symbolismiin. Tutkimukseni hypoteesi on, että kohdeteos kommentoi lajien välistä tasa-arvoa, eläinten kohtelua yhteiskunnassa sekä lajikeskustelussa esiintyvää ihmisen ja eläinten vastakkainasettelua. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tutkia, millä tavoin teos käsittelee näitä asioita, ja selvittää voidaanko tarinaa pitää kannanottona lajien välisen tasa-arvon puolesta. Pyrin myös etsimään tekstistä esimerkkejä spesismistä eli lajisorrosta ja tarkastelemaan käsitelläänkö ilmiötä kriittisesti.

Käytän tutkimuksen teoreettisena viitekehyksenä posthumanistista eläintutkimusta, jonka tavoitteena on luoda uudenlaista lajidiskurssia, joka pyrkii huomioimaan lajien välisen tasa-arvon ja poistamaan ihmisen erityisaseman muihin lajeihin nähden. Koska posthumanismi on vielä melko tuore suuntaus, alalle ei ole vielä muodostunut selkeitä kirjallisuudentutkimuksen käytänteitä tai metodeja. Siksi yhdistän tutkielmani analyysiosuudessa posthumanistisen eläintutkimuksen teoriaa poststrukturalistisen kirjallisuudentutkimuksen metodeihin. Näiden filosofioiden yhdisteleminen on luontevaa, sillä posthumanismia ja poststrukturalismia yhdistää kriittisyys humanistisia filosofioita kohtaan sekä pyrkimys paljastaa ja dekonstruoida tekstin ihmiskeskeisyys. Analyysissä tarkastelen miten tarina kuvaa lajien välisiä suhteita yleisesti, miten tarinan ihmishahmot suhtautuvat eläimiin ja kuinka eläinhahmot itse näkevät asemansa suhteessa ihmiseen ja muihin eläinlajeihin.

Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että kohdeteos ottaa kantaa lajien epätasa-arvoon kuvatessaan ihmisten ja eläinten välistä suhdetta sekä käsitellessään eläinten keskinäisiä suhteita. Erityisesti ihmisten tapoja omaksuneiden sikojen itsekeskeinen asenne ja syrjivä käytös muita eläimiä kohtaan oli helposti tulkittavissa spesismien kritiikiksi. Tarinan päättävä ihmisten ja sikojen yhteistyö puolestaan ottaa kantaa humanistiseen eläinoikeusajatteluun, jossa eläimen arvon määrittelee perinteisesti inhimillisinä pidetyt ominaisuudet, kuten älykyys sekä lingvistiset ja kognitiiviset taidot. Posthumanistisesta näkökulmasta tarkasteltuna *Animal Farm* kommentoi kriittisesti humanististen filosofioiden ja perinteisen eläinoikeusaatteen ihmiskeskeisyyttä sekä siitä johtuvaa epäonnistumista aiemmissa yrityksissä parantaa eläinten asemaa yhteiskunnassa. Teosta aiemmin tutkineet kriitikot ovat harvoin huomioineet tekstissä esiintyviä eläinaiheita, mikä myös kertoo yhteiskunnassa vallitsevasta asenteesta eläimiä kohtaan.

Asiasanat: posthumanismi, eläintutkimus, spesismi, eläimet, tasa-arvo, Orwell

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## 1. Introduction

George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, originally published in 1945, is perhaps one of the best-known animal stories ever written. It is a story of a small English farm where animals decide not to stand for their constant mistreatment by the farmer and take over the estate by expelling the humans. The animals of the eponymously renamed farm establish a new ideology called "Animalism" and agree on a set of rules by which their new community should live in order to create a utopia where all animals are equal and in control of their own lives. However, the pigs, being the most intelligent animals on the farm, are quickly allowed some self-assigned special privileges. As the rules are secretly altered by the pigs to better suit their preferences, the animals soon find themselves collaborating with their greatest enemy, the humans.

There has been plenty of earlier research on *Animal Farm*, mainly on its obvious political symbolism. Given the time of its publication, the comparisons to communism and the Soviet Union are quite understandable. According to John Rossi, Orwell was among the first writers to identify that communism was a "dangerous form of totalitarianism" instead of simply a revolutionary power (207). The novel's significance as a political satire is therefore undeniable. This thesis, however, focuses on themes and ideas that have usually been overlooked when interpreting the novel's political symbolism. The thesis continues the work started in my bachelor thesis of the same name in 2014, parts of which have been used as such and parts have been rewritten. The aim of the research is to consider the different ways in which *Animal Farm* addresses the question of animal equality, and whether or not the story can be usefully viewed as a commentary on relations between species, using posthumanism as a theoretical point of view. Instead of reading the animals merely as an allegory for human social issues, I will address the animals as animals and focus on the relationships between

different species; not only between humans and animals, but also between the different nonhuman animal species.

I will examine what kind of incidents of speciesism the text contains, if the incidents are committed by the characters, the narrator, or the text itself, and whether or not they are expressed critically. The starting point of the novel being the farm animals standing up to the humans who are supposed to care for them, I will also find out how the human/animal opposition is addressed in the novel. In a way, the story of *Animal Farm* develops into a direction that seems very posthumanist: humans are removed from the equation, as if to point out how we would react to the mistreatment of individuals – the farm animals in this case – if our attitudes were not affected by preconceived opinion about the human as species. Therefore, I also intend to consider if the novel contains other ideas that can be considered as posthumanist.

It seems that animal fiction is almost never interpreted simply as stories about animals. Because animals cannot speak for themselves, it is tempting for humans to write and read animal characters in a way that makes sense from a human point of view, and not necessarily from the point of view of the animals, as Brian Boyd explains:

because animals are mute, we can project ourselves onto them, and read our purposes in them. We can humanize them or moralize them, as in the fable and bestiary traditions (the industrious ant, the idle grasshopper). We turn them into metaphors, or nature does, because the gap of interspecies difference allows the charge of surprise at similarity that vivid metaphor requires. (228)

*Animal Farm* too has been, almost without exception, studied from the point of view of satire and political allegory. This is peculiar since *Animal Farm* was released over seventy years ago, and the animal rights movement has a history of over forty years: Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*, often considered to be the philosophical foundation of the movement, was published already in 1975. Of course, the few decades of work on animal issues is nothing compared to the centuries of humanist tradition. Literary criticism tends, almost without

exception, to treat animals appearing in literary texts as a symbol for some human issue, such as ethnicity, gender, or social class (Wolfe, *Animal Rites* 124). Timothy Clark elaborates the problem:

In most canonical literary texts, the place of non-human life is both pervasive but unseen. It is simply so uncontroversial as to make alternative readings centered on animals seem almost like a change of discipline. Any study of a text on the non-human always becomes a study of humanity in some sense. . . . At the same time, once the issue of animal exploitation is raised about a text, it immediately becomes obvious in ways that may leave little more to say. (187)

This applies to *Animal Farm* as well. That is why this thesis addresses not only the treatment of animals physically but also the treatment of animals as a part of a literary narrative – that is, not simply the way the animals in the story are treated by other characters but also how the narrative itself presents the animals. Therefore, I also use the term *animal equality* henceforth to refer to the ethical treatment of animals instead of the commonly used term *animal rights*, unless when specifically referring to the humanist animal rights theories and the animal rights movement.

As mentioned above, animals in canonical literary texts are often used to address other oppressed groups, such as women or ethnic minorities. Cary Wolfe considers this extremely problematic, because when the discourse of species is used to highlight the mistreatment of these social others, it automatically requires that we take for granted the “institution of speciesism” that entails that it is ethically acceptable to kill animals based on their species (*Animal Rites* 7). This means that if we interpret animals in anguish in a literary text as an analogue for a social other, we agree with the assumption that anguish in animals has no intrinsic value and it only becomes a matter of significance when used as a symbol for human suffering. Wolfe’s concern is not simply for animals, but for human others as well, because

as long as this humanist and speciesist structure of subjectivization remains intact, and as long as it is institutionally taken for granted that it is all right to

systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species, then the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against the social other of whatever species – or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference. (*Animal Rites* 8)

Therefore, to question the humanist theories and the discourse of species is very important, not just in terms of animal equality, but from a strictly human-related aspect as well.

Although the meaning of *Animal Farm* is also commonly thought to be human rather than animal suffering, and the theme of the novel is linked to the totalitarianism of the Soviet Union, Orwell still manages to say a lot about animal issues as well, whether on purpose or accidentally, as I aim to show in my analysis. The relevance of this research is, therefore, the possibility to change the attitudes towards nonhuman beings in literature and consequently in real life as well. My aim is to encourage readers as well as researchers to question their own way of reading animals, and hopefully improve the status of nonhuman species as literary subjects, and consequently moral subjects as well. In *Orwell and the Politics of Despair* (1988), Alok Rai suggests that Orwell's meanings are not hidden and "waiting to be discovered by the analysis of deep structures, of clusters of images and the mysterious intercourse of symbols" but that they "appear . . . emblazoned on the polished surfaces of his work" (4). In Rai's opinion "the traditional tools of literary criticism were not . . . designed to deal with the obvious," which is why, in studying Orwell, it is necessary to adjust the use of these methods of analysis to correspond with the "peculiar nature of the materials" (ibid.). I cannot think of a meaning less hidden in *Animal Farm* than the wellbeing of animals and the human-animal relationship, a meaning that is perhaps easily overlooked because it is so apparent. I argue that the surface story itself, combined with its intended allegorical meaning, has a substantial meaning, and by combining poststructuralist analysis and deconstruction with posthumanist animal studies I aim to explain the meaning and its significance.

## 2. Posthumanism and animal studies

Animal studies is a relatively young field of academics. Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*, often considered to be the philosophical foundation of the animal rights movement, was published in 1975, having an important cultural effect both on a political and on an individual level, but it was not until Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (1987) that the "scholarly studies of animals" finally began (Palmieri 408). James Gorman wrote in the *New York Times* in January 2012 about different courses in the "growing, but still undefined, field of animal studies" that American universities had begun to offer their students. Thus, it seems, animal studies were not acknowledged enough to be taught in universities until well into the twenty-first century.

According to Matthew Calarco (110), the reason why the animal question did not receive more attention in the latter part of the twentieth century is that other ethical questions, such as the holocaust, were of more interest to many great philosophers of the twentieth century, and the animal issues seemed unimportant in comparison. Also, because the field of animal studies "comprises a wide range of disciplines within the humanities, social sciences, and biological and cognitive sciences," the field itself, its theoretical grounds, or its terminology have not yet been strictly defined in a way that is generally acknowledged (Calarco 2). However, at least two questions connect most of what is being done in animal studies at the moment: "One question concerns the being of animals, or 'animality,' and the other concerns the human-animal distinction" (ibid.). Both of these questions will of course be discussed in this thesis as well.

Perhaps because animal studies is such a recent field, little research can be found on *Animal Farm* – or animal fiction in general – that would exclusively concentrate on the mistreatment of animals, an issue that is in no way covert in the novel, or the relationships



between different species. In fact, according to Clark, “apart from a few essays in scattered places, no literary movement with such modes of reading exists” (186). Literature is, however, a growing field of interest for animal studies, partly because it has been studied so little from this perspective, as Susan McHugh explains:

As a field of knowledge arguably rooted in claims to have special access to textual interpretation, literary studies becomes a special target of concern for scholars in animal studies, in part because precious few literary critics have attempted to account systematically for the seemingly countless animal aspects of texts. (“*Animal Farm’s* Lessons” 32)

Therefore, while it makes my research considerably more difficult, the animal point of view is an important way of reading a canonical novel, the animal characters of which have been dismissed in literary criticism for decades.

Calarco argues that one of the reasons why the “increased violence toward animals has not been more of a question for thought in recent Continental philosophy” is that “Continental philosophers place a priority on concrete existential and ethicopolitical issues over abstract metaphysical and epistemological issues” and therefore “the Nazi Holocaust is a common and privileged referent for many of these thinkers” (110). To most philosophers discussion about human suffering might seem more interesting, more important, or perhaps more appropriate than discussion about animal suffering, and “giving even minor attention to the mistreatment of animals in this political and philosophical context might appear at first blush to be highly questionable, and to dare to equate or compare the Nazi Holocaust with the mistreatment of animals would seem to be even more questionable” (ibid.). Perhaps in the case of *Animal Farm*, the reason of dismissing the animal question may be similar: even considering the animal issues to have significance in relation to the controversy of Soviet totalitarianism may seem unthinkable to some critics.

Although finding any animal-centered research on *Animal Farm* proved to be very difficult, McHugh (*Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* 182, henceforth referred

to as *Animal Stories*) notes that the more recent readings of *Animal Farm* do not merely focus on the political allegory but instead tend to acknowledge it as a story about animals. The origin story of the novel, explained by Orwell in “Preface to the Ukrainian Edition of *Animal Farm*,” would support the views that the novel contains ideas about human-animal relationships and not just political or social relationships:

On my return from Spain I thought of exposing the Soviet myth in a story that could be easily understood by almost anyone and which could be easily translated into other languages. However, the actual details of the story did not come to me for some time until one day (I was then living in a small village) I saw a little boy, perhaps ten years old, driving a huge cart-horse along a narrow path, whipping it whenever it tried to turn. It struck me that if only such animals became aware of their strength we should have no power over them, and that men exploit animals in much the same way as the rich exploit the proletariat.

I proceeded to analyse Marx's theory from the animals' point of view. To them it was clear that the concept of a class struggle between humans was pure illusion, since whenever it was necessary to exploit animals, all humans united against them: *the true struggle is between animals and humans*. From this point of departure, it was not difficult to elaborate the story. (405-406) (emphasis added)

According to McHugh (*Animal Stories* 182), Raymond Williams was the first to consider the passage above to indicate that perhaps the story is not simply an analogy for Orwell's personal feeling of disappointment in socialism but rather about exploitation in a much more general level, although he does point out that it would be difficult to argue that the real theme of *Animal Farm* is the “true struggle between animals and humans . . . without most of the surface of the story collapsing” (Williams 73). McHugh states that Williams' different perspective “leads the long, difficult shift away from reading *Animal Farm* strictly in terms of allegory” (*Animal Stories* 182). The commentary – and *Animal Farm*'s surface story in general – has still not been given the attention it should have, as Jeffrey M. Masson points out: “considering that Orwell's small book is considered the greatest statement ever written about revolution, it is astonishing that Orwell's own revolutionary comment about humans and animals has been effaced from the public record!” (qtd. in Tiffin 255).

Orwell's observation shows that he was aware of the problematic relationship between human and nonhuman beings when writing *Animal Farm*, and the novel itself proves that he reflected on the matter even further. Orwell's ideas about the subject are not entirely theoretical either. Alex Zwerdling argues that *Animal Farm* "could only have been written by someone who had observed life on a farm and how animals behave very closely" (qtd. in Firchow 98), and Orwell did indeed have some first-hand experience about raising animals (ibid. 100). According to Margaret Drabble (40) "Orwell was on the whole fond of animals and had far more day-to-day dealings with them throughout his life than many writers have had." Also, the first poem Orwell ever wrote, at the age of four or five, "was about a tiger and owed much, he says, to William Blake, that pioneer defender of animal rights" (ibid.). Orwell's fondness of animals as well as his admiration of William Blake suggest that animal issues would have been important to him, which is why it does not seem impossible to find ideas supporting animal equality in his work.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is posthumanism, based mainly on two works of Cary Wolfe: *What is Posthumanism?* (2009) and *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003). Posthumanism is quite a broad and diverse theory with different aspects to it. Therefore, in order to define the scope of my research, I have chosen these two books by Wolfe as my main theoretical references. In addition, one of the main influences on Wolfe's work seems to be Jacques Derrida's poststructuralist theory, which, according to Wolfe (*Animal Rites* 54), "is widely held to be nothing if not posthumanist or at least antihumanist." Derrida himself explains in "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)" (henceforth referred to as "The Animal") that as long as he has been writing he has "sought to dedicate to the question of the living and of the living animal," which, for him, "will always have been the most important and decisive question" (402). According to Calarco (139), Derrida "is concerned throughout all of his texts

on this issue to disrupt metaphysical discourses about animals that treat each singular animal as an instance of ‘The Animal,’ a homogeneous, essentialist, and reductive category that presumes that there is something in common shared by (or lacking in) all beings labeled ‘animal’” (139). Thus, Derrida’s concern of nonhuman beings is not restricted to literary representations, but to all aspects of the animal question, although all aspects of the problem stem from the same root:

It is all too evident that in the course of the last two centuries these traditional forms of treatment of the animal have been turned upside down by the joint developments of zoological, ethological, biological, and genetic *forms of knowledge* and the always inseparable *techniques* of intervention with respect to their object, the transformation of the actual object, its milieu, its world, namely, the living animal. This has occurred by means of farming and regimentalization at a demographic level unknown in the past, by means of genetic experimentation, the industrialization of what can be called the production for consumption of animal meat, artificial insemination on a massive scale, more and more audacious manipulations of the genome, the reduction of the animal not only to production and over-active reproduction (hormones, genetic crossbreeding, cloning, and so on) of meat for consumption but also of all sorts of other end products, and all of that in the service of a certain being and the so-called human well-being of man. (“The Animal” 394)

The developments for example in farming and meat industry, which Derrida mentions above, and their impact on the treatment of animals comes up in my analysis of *Animal Farm*, and because of his significance for the animal studies, as well as literary studies in general, I will also be discussing Derrida’s other ideas and the influence they have had on posthumanism and the discussion on animal equality.

## 2.1 *What is posthumanism?*

As an idea, posthumanism can be dated back as far as the late 1940s or early 1950s, when the interdisciplinary systems theory was developed, although the term “posthumanism” has only been used since the mid-1990s (Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* xii). The term *posthumanism* has several meanings, some of them having quite different priorities. Most relevant to this

thesis, Wolfe (*What is Posthumanism?* xvi-xvii) defines posthumanism as criticism of the humanist philosophies that emphasize humanity and the essence of human. He does not want to entirely abandon humanism – the ethical system centered on humans – but to point out how the philosophy and ethics of humanist theories restrain some quite admirable ideas and visions of humanism. It is the anthropocentrism of the humanist discourses that posthumanism criticizes and aims to change. For example, posthumanism does not agree with romanticism’s idea of “some original human nature suppressed by the artificial, from which it must be retrieved” and instead suggests that what defines human beings is “a general mix of malleability and resistance, together producing differing effects of disposition and capability according to context and condition” (Clark 66). Thus, humans are going through a constant process of adaptation and change that depends on their surroundings. According to Clark (ibid.), “it is increasingly recognised that this is the status also of many non-human species, so blurring not only the distinction of human and mechanical but of human and animal.”

One of the most prevalent ideas often related to and often confused with posthumanism is the concept of *transhumanism*. Making a distinction between the two is important since their aims do not correspond with each other. The aim of transhumanism is for humans to advance – with the help of modern technologies – in intelligence, as well as physical and emotional abilities, and have a generally longer lifespan, free from disease and other unnecessary suffering (Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* xiii). Wolfe (ibid. xv) in fact refers to transhumanism as “intensification of humanism”, meaning that it attempts to detach “the human” from “not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary” but from material and physical bonds as well. His own idea of posthumanism is basically the opposite: it entails the idea that human beings are deeply embedded in both the biological and the technological world – technological referring here to even the most basic implements, such as tools and language, that have evolved alongside human beings even before they have

become what we now understand as *human* – and that it is precisely the highly developed “technical, medical, informatic, and economical networks” that have now made it difficult to deny the need to shift from out-of-date anthropocentric views to “a new mode of thought that comes after the cultural repressions and fantasies, the philosophical protocols and evasions, of humanism as a historically specific phenomenon” (Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* xv-xvi). Therefore, our understanding of the lives of animals, and how they are abused, is the result of the very humanism that has earlier justified that abuse.

Although the strand of posthumanism that Wolfe represents shares many of the concerns and the ideas of the advocates of the animal rights movement, it also finds them flawed. According to Wolfe (*Animal Rites* 8), the problem with traditional animal rights philosophies, represented most famously by the utilitarian Peter Singer, author of *Animal Liberation* (1975), and the neo-Kantian Tom Regan, author of *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983), is that they approach the issue from a strictly humanist – that is human-oriented – point of view. In fact, Calarco (8) describes Regan’s work not as “a case for animal rights but for rights for subjects, the classical example of which is human beings. And inasmuch as animals manifest morally relevant human, or subjectlike, traits, they are brought under the scope of moral consideration.” In other words, the humanist theories of animal rights rely mainly on presuppositions that humans possess particular attributes – such as the ability to suffer, experience subjectivity, or have moral worth – and aim to establish that animals possess these attributes too, thereby justifying why animals should be granted certain basic rights as well (Clark 187). Because “moral philosophy functions, by and large, within an implicit anthropocentric, subject-centered model,” the animal rights theorists have had to depend on the language and demands of that model “in order to make a case that can gain a hearing within [the] model” (Calarco 9). The problem is that because it is actually that very same anthropocentric “moral model, language, and demands that have been used to deny

animals basic moral standing for centuries,” the animal rights theorists have managed “to include only certain animals within that scope and to draw only a new, slightly different exclusionary boundary” and “a slightly different version of anthropocentrism and subject-centrism” (ibid.).

As explained above, instead of trying to extend human subjectivity to animals, posthumanism strives to expose anthropocentrism in the current species discourse and to address animal issues from a different point of view. One of its aims is to question the whole concept of *human* in the based on the fact that there are unambiguous differences between what is considered *human* and what is considered *animal* (Clark 187). As “the traditionally distinctive marks of the human (first it was possession of a soul, then ‘reason,’ then tool use, then tool making, then altruism, then language, then the production of linguistic novelty, and so on) flourish quite reliably beyond the species barrier” (Wolfe, *Animal Rites* 2) it makes sense to question, as Jouni Teittinen (159) does, whether any remaining dissimilarities between human and other species can function as actual proof of a legitimate distinction or simply as an attempt to justify a preconceived idea of a categorical difference.

## *2.2 Poststructuralism and binary oppositions*

As mentioned earlier, posthumanism owes a lot to poststructuralism and that is why many of the methods of analysis used in this thesis come from poststructuralism. While poststructuralism suggests that we can understand the world through language, it also realizes that because we take language for granted, the meanings that we assume words hold are merely subjective understandings of the meanings of those words (Bertens 105-106). This means that the meanings given to a particular word can hold a negative meaning without us even realizing it. A word we use, the signifier, is not in any way controlled by what they refer

to, the signified, but it is able to refer to the signified because of difference from other words; the meanings of words are connected to meanings of other words, including their opposites (Bertens 108). In “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (henceforth referred to as “Structure, Sign, and Play”) Derrida states that “the central signified . . . is never absolutely present outside a system of differences” (354). Thus, the signifier remains the same while the signified changes constantly. The meanings of words result from *differance*, which means that words differ from other words as well as defer to the meanings of other words. Therefore, we can never assign one definite meaning to a word because all the past meanings affect that word as well. This constant uncertainty and change of meanings also results in the fact that there is no absolute *presence*, something that we can know for sure outside of language. As Derrida explains (*Of Grammatology* 166), “Speech and the consciousness of speech – that is to say consciousness simply as self-presence – are the phenomenon of an auto-affection lived as the suppression of differance. That *phenomenon*, that presumed suppression of differance, that lived reduction of the opacity of the signifier, are the origin of what is called presence.” In other words, although we might think that the ideas we want to express are *present* to us before we even think about putting them into words, that they are not affected by differance, those ideas do not in fact exist outside of language (Bertens 107). We perceive the presence, that the ideas have absolute meanings, because we assume that we can suppress the differance of language. The absence of presence also suggests that there can be no essential meanings, which will be discussed in the following section.

As explained above, language can steer our thinking into a certain direction because even single words may contain meanings that we do not necessarily realize. Those hidden meanings of the signifiers, derived from their relationships to other signifiers, may give negative or positive connotations also to the signified. From a posthumanist point of view, the



whole discourse of species is problematic regarding animal equality precisely because of connotations that are attached to certain terms. According to Clark (185-86), the terminology used when addressing the relationship between humans and animals is often misleading: the two are placed on a scale where “the human” is on one end and “the animal” on the other, the latter term – in singular form – representing the whole variety of different nonhuman animals. Binary oppositions such as this animal/human relation – other such oppositions could be, for example, good/evil, masculine/feminine, and white/black – are often used to explain texts, while one of these terms is always seen as *privileged*, having a sort of naturally defined status (Bertens 112-13). Because of this assumption the oppositions can reinforce negative phenomena such as discrimination, social inequity, and repression (ibid.). Posthumanism argues that the opposition of human/animal, in which “human” is the privileged term, is falsely seen as natural because of the species discourse used to discuss the issues. This is an example of posthumanism utilizing poststructuralism, trying to deconstruct the opposition of human/animal, where one is preferred over the other.

Instead of comparing the similarities of different species, as the humanist animal rights theory often does, Derrida approaches the human/animal opposition by explaining the vast differences of different species:

Beyond the edge of the so-called human, beyond it but by no means on a single opposing side, rather than "the Animal" or "Animal Life," there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living, or more precisely (since to say "the living" is already to say too much or not enough) a multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead, relations of organization or lack of organization among realms that are more and more difficult to dissociate by means of the figures of the organic and inorganic, of life and/or death. These relations are at once close and abyssal, and they can never be totally objectified. They do not leave room for any simple exteriority of one term with respect to another. ("The Animal" 399).

This, according to Calarco, denies “the possibility of making any kind of clean distinction between human and animal, not only because of the irreducible plurality of beings but also

because of the multiplicity of becomings and relational structures between human and animal” (142). He explains that “If what we call ‘animal life’ is constituted by a ‘heterogeneous multiplicity’ of entities and a ‘multiplicity of organizations of relations’ between organic and inorganic life forms,” then there is no sense in an “insuperable division between human and animal” since human beings also “belong to this multiplicity of beings and relations” (ibid.). Animals can therefore not be treated as simply a homogenous nonhuman mass, and human beings and nonhuman animals should not be treated two distinct groups in a binary opposition but as a heterogeneous “community of animals” (Clark 186). However, deconstruction is not meant to deny a difference between two concepts (Culler 87) but rather to expose the bias towards one concept over the other. According to Derrida (“Positions” 36) “in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a *vis-à-vis*, but with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms controls the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), holds the superior position. To deconstruct the opposition is first, at a given moment, to overthrow the hierarchy.” In order to neutralize the opposition we must first turn the opposition around, and because “the hierarchy of the dual opposition always reconstitutes itself,” this task of *inversion* should not be forgotten at any point of the analysis (ibid.). In my analysis I present examples of human/animal oppositions found in the novel attempt to overthrow the hierarchy by discussing what kind of assumptions and connotations those oppositions hold.

### 2.3 *Speciesism and essentialism*

One of the key terms related to animal equality – in posthumanism as well as in humanist animal rights theories – is that of *speciesism*. According to Peter Singer’s definition, speciesism is “a prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one’s

own species and against those of members of other species” (6). As an example, Singer (qtd. in Wolfe, *Animal Rites* 34) points out the hypocrisy of using chimpanzees as test subjects in medical research, exposing them to pain and suffering and forcing them to live in captivity, whereas treating a mentally handicapped person with an even lower mental capacity the same way would be unthinkable. Here the basis for moral subjectivity is not a higher level of consciousness, an ability to communicate or feel pain, but simply the membership of a biological species. According to Singer “It should be obvious that the fundamental objections to racism and sexism . . . apply equally to speciesism. If possessing a higher degree of intelligence does not entitle one human to use another for his or her own ends, how can it entitle humans to exploit nonhumans for the same purpose?” (6). Moral worth cannot be based on a biological factor such as species, just as it cannot be based on race or gender. The basis for moral subjectivity should therefore be something else than merely the biological species.

There are of course differing views across the field of animal studies. For example, Singer (19) admits that killing a healthy human can be considered worse than killing a mouse on grounds of several criteria but states that none of those criteria follow strictly the bounds of species. Posthumanism, on the other hand, seems to suggest that since it is practically impossible to define where to draw the line for when killing is acceptable and when it is not, no such line should be drawn. Although the issue is not unproblematic, it is a poor excuse to rely on the humanist ideology that allows cruelty to nonhuman beings. The problem that speciesism creates is that when members of other species are primarily considered as “other than human”, that is, based on what they are not, instead of what or who they actually are, people see and consequently treat other species not as individuals but as a single mass, as what Derrida refers to as “the Animal” (“The Animal” 399). However, “Among nonhumans and separate from nonhumans *there is an immense multiplicity of other living things that*

*cannot in any way be homogenized, except by means of violence and willful ignorance, within the category of what is called the animal or animality in general*" (ibid. 416) (emphasis added).

In addition to the label of *animality*, we also have to look at the label of *humanity*, as in that what makes one *human*. The way classical humanism perceives human beings is that we have some kind of invariable quality within us that makes us human, usually called *human nature* or *human essence*. This essentialism – one of the main criticisms of poststructuralism (Bertens 103) – is one of the main causes of speciesist thinking. In terms of speciesism, humanism has two sides: "an inclusive side, according to which *all* humans are first-class moral patients, and an exclusive side, according to which *only* humans are first-class moral patients" (Cavalieri 70). However, as explained above, a biological species is not a valid ground for moral subjectivity. Some humanist theories admit this but still demand that there is some definite attribute that humans possess which gives moral subjectivity to humans but not to animals. There are, however, people living in isolated areas whose moral community may not reach further than their own tribe or village (ibid.). If these people do not account us as members of their moral community, then do they not consider us as human? And should we not nonetheless consider them as human? According to Wolfe

the humanist concept of subjectivity is inseparable from the discourse and *institution* of speciesism, which relies on the tacit acceptance . . . that the full transcendence of the 'human' requires the sacrifice of the 'animal' and the animalistic, which in turn makes possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in a 'noncriminal putting to death' (as Derrida puts it) not only of animals, but other *humans* as well by marking *them* as animal. (*Animal Rites* 43)

What Wolfe is saying is that if we accept there to be a certain transcendent quality of *human* that gives us our moral worth, there will always be people who will deny other people, as well as animals, their moral worth on the basis that they do not possess that quality. For example, in the past the Western tradition – on which the humanist ethics are based – has

justified phenomena such as slavery and the crusades on the basis that the people involved, who were killed, oppressed, and exploited, were not classified as human (Spivak 229). Thus, ethics based on what is *essentially human* can result in serious incidents of speciesism and other kinds of discrimination.

As mentioned above, the vast variety of nonhuman beings cannot all be grouped into a single homogenous “category of what is called the animal or animality in general” (Derrida, “The Animal” 416), meaning that there is no *animal essence*. Derrida also debunks the idea of *human essence* by explaining that *human* could not exist without an other, in this case *animal*, basing his arguments on language, not surprisingly. According to Derrida language is a field of “infinite substitutions,” not because it is so large, but because “there is something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions” (“Structure, Sign and Play” 365). Defining the center is impossible “because the sign which replaces the center, which supplements it, taking the center’s place in its absence – this sign is added, occurs as a surplus, as a *supplement*” (ibid.). Thus, the signification given to a language structure not only supplements the center by replacing it but also supplements the structure in the sense that it adds something new to it (ibid. 365-66). This effect of *supplementarity* is also what “makes possible all that constitutes the property of man: speech, society, passion, etc.” (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 244). However, “supplementarity, which *is nothing*, neither a presence nor an absence, is neither a substance nor an essence of man” (ibid.). Therefore “Man *calls himself* man only by drawing limits excluding his other from the play of supplementarity: the purity of nature, of animality, primitivism, childhood, madness, divinity” (ibid.). In other words, “the term ‘human’ gains sense only in relation to a series of excluded terms and identities, foremost among them nature and animality” (Calarco 104). In Wolfe’s opinion Derrida’s ideas may not be very useful in creating new practical policies for animal welfare but they are “of immense use in forcing us to live with the fact that no matter

how such policies are drawn, the distinction between human and animal should be of no use in drawing them” (*What Is Posthumanism?* 98). The importance of language for the case of animal equality will be discussed further in the following section. The question of essentialism, on the other hand, will be discussed in the analysis section within the context of the novel.

## 2.4 *Animals and language*

One of the major themes in *Animal Farm* is language, which the pigs take advantage of on several occasions in order to make the other animals subject to their will (Lee 122-23). The theme of language is important in regards to animal issues and consequently to my research for two reasons. First, language and its varied degrees of complexity is often considered to be what differentiates humans from animals, which is of course relevant to my research from the perspective of the human-animal opposition. According to Derrida, philosophers from Aristotle to the likes of Lacan, Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Levinas

all of them say the same thing: the animal is without language. Or more precisely unable to respond, to respond with a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction, the animal is without the right and power to ‘respond’ and hence without many other things that would be the property of man. (“The Animal” 400)

The animals’ inability to “respond” is thus a popular argument used to deny animals of their moral subjectivity. For example, Luc Ferry (qtd. in Wolfe, *Animal Rites* 38), criticizes the animal rights ideology and its accusations of speciesism by proposing that ethics are based on a *contractarian* model, which suggests that an ethical contract protects those who are able to understand and agree with the contract out of their free will, the protection being transitive to some – such as small children – who are unable to understand the contract. According to Ferry (ibid.), animals are not protected by the contract – being unable to understand it – but instead humans have an indirect obligation towards animals, out of politeness, to treat them

with “*certain* respect,” and failing to fulfill this obligation may cause human beings to lose their humanity. The problem with the contractarian approach is of course – besides being based on dogmatic rather than theoretical grounds (Clark 189) – that it is not much comfort to those who are not able to sign the contract, such as animals in this case. If the animals do not have the possibility to agree nor disagree – to *respond* – with the contract, then is it justified to deny them of all rights? Tom Regan (17) points out, as an example, that by the contractarian logic the apartheid would have been acceptable as long as not too many white South Africans had been upset by it. In the case of animals the problem of course relates to language: as they do not share the language that would allow them to enter the contract, they are unable to gain moral subjectivity. It seems illogical that we should be able deny moral subjectivity from another being based on a contract that we have devised and that the other being cannot understand.

Language also brings us back to the question of human essence discussed in the previous section. A language barrier between humans and other species seems obvious and many humanists, such as the philosophers mentioned above, wish to use that barrier as a dividing factor between humans and animals: humans are supposedly human because they have a kind of language that no other species has. However, Wolfe points out that

it is not simply a question of ‘giving language back to the animal,’ but rather of showing how the difference in *kind* between human and animal that humanism constitutes on the site of language may instead be thought as difference in *degree* on a continuum of signifying processes disseminated in field of materiality, technicity, and contingency, of which ‘human’ ‘language’ is but a specific (albeit highly refined) instance. (*Animal Rites* 79)

Therefore, according to Clark, “Human language is only one of a vast network of signifying possibilities across innumerable species” and “Human subjectivity and language are possible only on the basis of deeper structures of signification and communication that have nothing exclusively human about them” (53). While it differs from the communication of other

species in degree, human language is not unique in the sense that it would justify the human-animal division, nor is it something that other species should master in order to be taken seriously as moral subjects by humans. Because members of different species have different capacities for attributes such as language, senses of smell and hearing, or kinesthesia, “human-animal relations cannot be regarded as incomplete versions of human-human relations but must be regarded as complete versions of relations between different kinds of animals” (Patton 97). Similarly, in my view, human-animal communication cannot be approached with the attitude that animals use some kind of imperfect version of human language, that human language is a default value against which all other communication should be compared, and that human language is a goal towards which other species should aspire in order to gain a status human – or at least human-like – beings. After all, *human* language is a concept that has been developed by humans and given to humans by humans themselves, while denying it to other beings, as Derrida points out:

It is less a matter of asking whether one has the right to refuse the animal such and such a power (speech, reason, experience of death, mourning, culture, institution, technics, clothing, lie, pretense of pretense, covering of tracks, gift, laughter, tears, and so on – the list is necessarily without limit, and the most powerful philosophical tradition within which we live has refused the ‘animal’ of all those things) than of asking whether what calls itself human has the right to rigorously attribute to man, which means therefore to attribute to himself, what he refuses the animal, and whether he can ever possess the *pure, rigorous, indivisible* concept, as such, of that attribution. (“And Say the Animal Responded?” 137-38)

Derrida’s approach in deconstructing the opposition of human/animal is thus not about proving that animals possess certain attributes but rather questioning whether humans do either.

The second reason why language is important for animal issues is that, as posthumanism and poststructuralism suggest, discrimination and partiality are in fact caused by language, or more precisely the discourses we use. Orwell himself states that “if thought



corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought” (“Politics and the English Language” 137). Orwell’s interest in language has been clearly acknowledged in earlier research. According to Lee, what Orwell is trying to say with *Animal Farm* is that a “society which cannot control its language is . . . doomed to be oppressed in terms which deny it the very most elemental aspects of humanity” and that “those who control the means of communication have the most awful of powers – they literally can create the truth they choose” (127). A similar idea appears in Orwell’s other famous novel, the dystopian *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), where an artificial language of the totalitarian state of Oceania called “Newspeak” is lacking any words that might be used to generate ideas against the state itself or its political ideology Ingsoc, as explained by Orwell himself:

The purpose of Newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of Ingsoc, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and Oldspeak forgotten, a heretical thought – that is, a thought diverging from the principles of Ingsoc – should be literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words. (“The Principles of Newspeak” 312)

The assumption is that one cannot come up with revolutionary ideas if one has no words for such ideas.

In “Politics and the English Language” Orwell expresses his worry about the state of English language – in the mid-1940s when the essay was written – but also his belief that something can be done about the matter:

I said earlier that the decadence of our language is probably curable. Those who deny this would argue, if they produced an argument at all, that language merely reflects existing social conditions, and that we cannot influence its development by any direct tinkering with words and constructions. So far as the general tone or spirit of a language goes, this may be true, but it is not true in detail. Silly words and expressions have often disappeared, not through any evolutionary process but owing *to the conscious action of a minority*. (137-38) (emphasis added)

Orwell's concerns are mainly aesthetical but the idea that language change is not uncontrollable, that it can happen through a conscious effort, is important for the endeavor of moving towards a less biased species discourse. For example, Orwell (ibid. 139) advises against using dead metaphors, which could also include many speciesist expressions, such as insulting someone by calling them a rat or a pig, or describing a cruel human individual as an animal. Orwell's purposes might not be the same as those of the posthumanists but the violation of using a phrase or a metaphor out of a habit without actually thinking what kind of meaning it actually holds is the same in both cases. His understanding of the importance of language and his faith in our ability to develop it reminds me of Clark's view:

We cannot choose to step out of language and somehow orient ourselves in the world without it – how in any case would such an experience be conveyed to others? Language is, rather, a kind of decisive environment out of which we define ourselves. This is an environment that, especially in the West, *expresses the overwhelming and often oppressive weight of centuries of anthropocentric modes of thought and perception* but that still *contains hidden resources and inventive possibilities for those writers and thinkers able to discern and exploit them.* (54) (emphasis added)

Language is clearly a factor that relates closely to *Animal Farm* and Orwell did consider the power that language can have in his other work as well. In the analysis section I will discuss different ways in which the pigs in *Animal Farm* use language in oppressing the other animals and creating an unequal relationship between the different species.

### **3. Allegory**

It has already been established that *Animal Farm* is widely acknowledged to be an allegory of the Russian Revolution and the failure of communism. Before the actual analysis of the novel, it is useful to address some general ideas of what is meant by *allegory* in order to recognize the different levels of meaning in an allegorical text and to understand why the

most obvious interpretation is not necessarily the only possible or relevant meaning that the novel contains.

According to a general understanding “the term allegory refers to a way of saying or showing one thing and meaning another” (Machosky 1) and usually when interpreting an allegory there is a conscious effort to separate what is said and what the text actually means (ibid. 17). However, the definition is simplified and imperfect and this way of reading an allegory is quite a conventional one. Such conventional ways of reading have been addressed among others by Paul de Man, a poststructuralist like Derrida. De Man comments on the shift of focus from form to reference in literary criticism during the twentieth century by noting that “The polarities of inside and outside have been reversed, but they are still the same polarities that are at play: internal meaning has become outside reference, and the outer form has become the intrinsic structure” (4). Thus, according to de Man (5), whether the focus is on the form or on the reference, most literary criticism tends to view literature as a box that needs to be opened by a reader or a critic in order to set free the hidden contents of the box. According to the box metaphor, the meaning of a text is either considered to be within the text, in its form, with no outside reference, or outside the text, in the references it makes for example to the surrounding culture or the author himself. De Man (5) questions the way *interpretation* is generally perceived and the way that the meaning of a text can supposedly be understood only through this inside/outside metaphor. The polarity of the two terms gives the impression that the actual meaning of an allegorical text is completely separate from its literal meaning, as if the two are complete opposites, and this opposition needs to be challenged (ibid.).

Derrida’s ideas also appear in discussions of allegory. According to Maureen Quilligan, “The ‘other’ named by the term *allos* in the word ‘allegory’ is not some other hovering above the words of the text, but the possibility of an otherness, a polysemy, inherent

in the very words on the page; allegory therefore names the fact that language can signify many things at once” (qtd. in Machosky 18). The ‘other’ in allegory is therefore clearly connected to the concept of difference (Hunter 162). Deconstruction is also essential to reading allegory, but Machosky emphasizes that it is not merely a method that is systematically “applied to some object” (16). Instead she sees deconstruction as “an allegorical mode of reading, a way of reading the gaps that naturally occur in language, gaps that cannot be avoided, no matter how carefully something is written” (ibid.). It is also important to acknowledge that allegory, unlike many other methods of writing and interpreting literature, accepts that these gaps exist (ibid.). Therefore, claiming an allegorical text to have one true meaning is unfounded. Also, reading texts as allegories does not have any straightforward strategies or techniques. As Lynette Hunter explains, allegory is grounded on “interaction rather than imposition,” which is why “specific definitions and enumerated theories are difficult to provide” (164).

### 3.1 *The allegories in Animal Farm*

Although the aim of this research is to focus on the animal issues in the novel that have usually been left unaddressed, the point is not to deny that *Animal Farm* has allegorical meanings. The novel is clearly not just a story about farm animals but of something of a much larger scale. However, alternative readings of the novel should be welcomed, because if we continue to read *Animal Farm* “as George Orwell’s allegory of Stalin’s USSR, then the animals as animals disappear from view and are replaced by the humans they symbolize,” and a reading of this kind gives “the reason for the fulsome list ‘explaining’ what each allegorical animal stands for . . .” (Fudge 13). Such a list is provided, among others, by Elaheh Fadaee (23-25) who itemizes most of the characters and many events of the novel,

explaining the *human* equivalents that each character or event has, as does Jeffrey Meyers (135-36). John Rodden also lists correspondence between the novel and real events, expressing his concern that “If a reader misses such allegorical correspondences, he or she may completely misread the book” (72). Rodden’s concern is of course not completely unproblematic, because as Erica Fudge points out, while these lists make it much easier to teach the novel, they also make void “the possibility of reading it as having anything to say about human-animal relations” (13). Although it seems that to read *Animal Farm* as having only its literal meaning is perhaps considered foolish by many scholars, it is also important to acknowledge that *Animal Farm* may contain more allegories than the one that is generally considered to be the “true meaning” of the novel. Whether or not the reader acknowledges the similarities between the events and characters in the book and events and characters in real life, he or she can still find the story to hold legit meanings – literal or allegorical – that are not tied strictly to the events of the Soviet Union. In fact, Rodden (73) does see *Animal Farm* as working on different levels of allegory. Although referring to it as “a children’s story” – as a lot of animal fiction seems often to be labeled – he admits that “As an animal story, the work invites the reader to respond compassionately to the sufferings of vulnerable beasts” and that “readers identify with the suffering and oppression of the poor animals” (ibid.). This recognition of the reader’s ability to sympathize and identify with suffering animals is an important one, but once we replace the animals with humans that they supposedly symbolize we often make the assumption that we are actually meant to sympathize and identify with the human correspondents instead of the animal characters. As Fudge points out, “an allegorical reading that interprets [an animal] as always symbolising something else silences the presence of [that animal] as the suffering center of the story” (13), and this is what Rodden quickly moves towards in his analysis:

Beyond an explicit, literal level, then, are three symbolic levels on which *Animal Farm* operates. First, it is a historical satire of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent Soviet dictatorship, in which the precision of Orwell's allegory covers exact historical correspondences between the events of *Animal Farm* and Soviet history up to 1943.

Second, *Animal Farm* is a political treatise that suggests larger lessons about power, tyranny, and revolution in general. On this level, Orwell's book has a much broader historical and political message, one that is not limited to criticism of the Soviet Union. (73)

The first level is perhaps the most commonly understood one, which I have already pointed out several times during the thesis, and it needs no further scrutiny at this point. The second level, however, is a much more relevant one in regard to the animal question. If, as Rodden suggests, the story is about power relations and tyranny in general, there is no reason why its message should be limited to human-human relations alone. Although many critics seem to insist this is not the case, a story that features animals as its main characters can in fact address the animal question beyond the literal meaning, as I will explain in the analysis section.

The final level of symbolic meaning that Rodden presents is perhaps the most problematic in relation to animals:

Third, *Animal Farm* is a fable, or a 'fairy tale,' as Orwell termed it. It carries a universal moral about the 'animality' of human nature. For instance, by the conclusion of *Animal Farm*, some of the pigs are walking upright and wearing human clothes: they are little different from corrupt human beings. *Animal Farm* mirrors our human world, which is sometimes referred to as 'the human circus' because the various types of human personality can be compared to the character types of animals. Some humans are like pigs, others resemble sheep, still others can be compared to dogs, and so forth. On this level, Orwell's 'fable' about human nature transcends both history and particular political events. We see how the fundamental characters of animals do not change. The animals behave consistently, whether in a noble or selfish spirit, through all the changes in the story from the feudal, aristocratic, conservative farm run by Mr. Jones to the modern, progressive, radical 'animal farm' ruled by Napoleon. (73)

In Rodden's analysis, which is very much in line with the general view of the meaning of *Animal Farm*, mostly negative traits are mirrored in the stereotypical behavior of the animal

characters. If similar negative stereotyping was used with characters of different gender or ethnicity, it would be considered extremely offensive, but with animals we accept the stereotypes much more willingly. Doing this we deny the different species of having the capacity for diversity of character and capabilities.

The negative stereotypes and the different characteristic human types portrayed in animal characters are clear, although quite simplified, examples of *anthropomorphism*, and based on the earlier work done on *Animal Farm* – articles about political symbolism and critique of communism in the novel – it is obvious that the novel is considered to contain many such examples. Anthropomorphism is defined by *The Hutchinson Dictionary of Ideas* (2005) as “the attribution of human characteristics to animals, inanimate objects, or deities” and it is often used as a “literary device in fables and allegories.” Interpreted as simplified allegories, anthropomorphism is directly related to the problem presented in the introduction: animals in literature hardly ever represent animal issues. Clark also points out that to report something as “anthropomorphic” requires assumptions of what actually is *human* – assumptions that certain attributes, whether or not they are ascribed to other beings, are unquestionably human attributes (194). Since “All human knowledge is anthropomorphic in some way”, it is actually difficult to even determine where anthropomorphism begins and ends (ibid.). For example, if a text describes a nonhuman animal going through a thought process or having feelings of affection or fear, and we label this as anthropomorphism, we are then making the assumption that those thoughts or feelings are definitely attributes of human beings only, most likely without knowing whether the animal in question actually possesses similar attributes.

### 3.2 *Reversing the allegory*

Lynette Hunter explains that “If, as Orwell suggests, words and worlds fossilize through historical accretions, allegory is a device for stripping away those accretions” (164). Words can thus be given new meanings through allegory or, alternatively, issues can be discussed using a different kind of discourse. However, it is important to remember that the meanings of words accumulate instead of replacing each other, and discourse draws new meanings from the subject with which it is used. While mistreated animals, such as in *Animal Farm*, have been used as an allegory for oppression of human beings, similarly human persecutions are sometimes used as a comparison to the plight of animals, in fiction as well as in academic texts. Calarco admits that such comparisons may be problematic and questionable, but also points out that “we cannot view the comparison of violence toward human beings and animals as scandalously inadequate *simply* because it compares human to nonhuman life” (110). I argue that Orwell has managed to address animal suffering in a context that not only compares human suffering to animal suffering, as the popular interpretation insists, but also vice versa. The allegory should work both ways. In his analysis of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Julie*, de Man speculates that we cannot be sure “whether the preface was written for the main text or the main text for the preface” (205). Similarly we may ask whether Orwell meant to draw attention to the problems of socialism or to the problems of animal welfare. The first alternative seems the most obvious, and this has been stated by numerous critics during the past seventy years, for example by David Dwan, who notes that *Animal Farm* “is, of course, a transparent allegory of the fate of communism in the U.S.S.R.” (655). But it is precisely the fact that this comparison is so obvious that draws my attention back to the animals. It is as if the animal question has been left there, right before our eyes, with the



intention of capturing our attention with the obvious political allegory shining in the background.

As Tiffin (256) points out, analyzing the story from the animal perspective does not suggest that the traditional readings of the novel are in any sense wrong or insignificant. However, “the almost exclusive focus on the human in the interpretations of [*Animal Farm*] draws attention to our habitual allegorizing of stories we take to be only ‘ostensibly’ about animals; our blindness to their actual presences as co-beings on the planet; and our determined conversions of their presences into absence” (ibid.). The generally acknowledged political interpretations of the novel do not rule out other interpretations either because, as Roland Barthes suggests in “The Death of the Author”, the meaning of the text is not something definite that is set by the author and his or her background but something that the reader is free to create based on a whole variety of meanings in the text: “a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not . . . the author” (148). Therefore, it is justifiable and even necessary to study *Animal Farm*, a novel with an established status as a political satire, from a fresh point of view – that of the farm animals – since it may give a better perspective of the culturally derived mindset that causes the negligence for the well-being of most nonhuman animals.

The starting point for my analysis is based on de Man’s view of allegory that, as explained earlier, challenges the inside/outside opposition of the text. The true meaning is traditionally considered to be hidden somewhere within the text, buried under its literal meaning, but if we question this hierarchy it is possible to find hidden meanings even at the surface of the text. In the case of *Animal Farm* this means that there may be significant meanings, hidden or in plain sight, that do not require us to interpret the animal characters as humans.

#### 4. Animal equality in *Animal Farm*

Given the time and the political environment when it was written it is not difficult to understand why *Animal Farm* has only been studied as political symbolism. In fact, according to Peter Davison (vii), Orwell himself has admitted that the book mainly satirizes the Russian Revolution but that it was also intended to be applied to other violent revolutions conspired by people who are subconsciously hungry for power, revolutions that can lead to change only in the ruling class while the initial problems stay the same. The question of animal equality did not have much academic support before Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* was published in 1970, but the fact that Orwell uses farm animals as a metaphor for oppressed people proves that the problem was conceivable even in his time. In fact, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, a group that "was among the most successful of the bodies which continuously influenced nineteenth-century opinion," was established as early as 1824 (Harrison 787-88). However, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century "the terrors of the wars and the humility of the Great Depression turned attention away from animal suffering and toward human suffering" (Preece 296).

Towards the end of the Second World War animal issues took a step forward when veganism, both the term and the practice, was acknowledged in Britain "to identify those who not only reject all flesh and animal byproducts from their diet, including honey, but also refuse to wear or use any products made from animals or involving harm to animals" (Preece 16). Thus, the ethical treatment of animals was definitely an issue already when *Animal Farm* was published, and the vegan principle that "no animal was to be exploited for human benefit" (ibid. 297) seems to correspond with the ideas of Animalism – the ideology created by the animals in *Animal Farm* – such as "no animal must ever tyrannise over his own kind" (*Animal Farm* 6, henceforth referred to as *AF*). In fact, the whole basis of the story in *Animal*

*Farm* asserts that animals are treated poorly: the farmer Jones and his men neglect feeding and tending to the animals, which ultimately leads the animals to break out of their pens. Defending themselves against the outraged humans they manage to exile Jones and his workers from the farm. By letting the animals speak for themselves, the text can be considered to speak against the mistreatment of animals and for animal equality. According to Drabble, Orwell was “deeply sensitized to the suffering of others,” both human beings and animals, and he used his writing as a means to make people notice the suffering of other beings and to realize “that they are not debarred from the experience of suffering by belonging to some subhuman or foreign category” (46). What Drabble considers to be crucial about Orwell is “his attitude toward the goodness of beasts and the beastliness of human nature” (43), which suggests Orwell to have quite an essentialist view of humans. Because of this essentialist attitude and the sinister ending of the novel, Orwell might have seen animal equality, like socialism, as an impossible utopia; something with a noble cause but, because of selfish and cruel individuals, a fruitless outcome. It is only the posthumanist viewpoint that lets us see beyond that humanist interpretation and understand how the speciesism of both the humans and the animals in the novel is what ruins the possibility for equality between the different species. When that speciesism becomes overt, the text can actually be read to support the idea of animal equality in many ways.

#### *4.1 Overt mistreatment of animals*

*Animal Farm* has several statements that openly comment on the humans’ neglect of the wellbeing of animals. The novel begins by describing how “Mr. Jones, of the Manor Farm, had locked the hen-houses for the night, but was too drunk to remember to shut the pop-holes” (*AF* 1) and it is later explained that lately Jones “had taken to drinking more than was

good for him” and failed to take care of his duties: “his men were idle and dishonest, the fields were full of weeds, the buildings wanted roofing, the hedges were neglected, and the animals were underfed” (*AF* 11). On Midsummer’s Day, the day of the Rebellion, Jones’s workers “had milked the cows in the early morning and then had gone out rabbiting, without bothering to feed the animals” while Jones himself sleeps all day after a long night of drinking, “so that when evening came the animals were still unfed” (*AF* 11). When the hungry and outraged animals break in to the storage shed to have something to eat, Jones and his men go in to stop them “with whips in their hands, lashing out in all directions” (*AF* 12). Thus, the humans violently attack the animals they have already caused damage to by failing to care for their needs. As these actions are deemed unjust by describing the animals’ distress and hunger, the text can be read to disapprove of mistreating animals and also speaking for animal equality. Jones being one of the most common surnames in Britain, it can be argued that farmer Jones is meant to represent not only “the everyman” but also literally every man, mankind in general. This reflects on the issue that humans are generally quite negligent of animals and have little sympathy or respect towards them, especially cattle, at least in the sense that in the end they are merely bred and brought up to be killed and consumed.

In the first chapter a respected board called Major gives a speech that functions as the moral basis for Animalism and provides the encouragement the animals need to eventually rebel against the humans:

Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength; and the very instant that our usefulness has come to an end we are slaughtered with hideous cruelty. No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or leisure after he is a year old. No animal in England is free. The life of an animal is misery and slavery: that is the plain truth. (*AF* 3)

Major's words difficult to disagree with, at least from a posthumanist standpoint, even when he points out the unjustness that "Man is the only creature that consumes without producing" and still "he is lord of all the animals" (*AF* 4). Here again, although the statement is not an objective one, the text seems to suggest that humans are the cause of a lot of animal suffering and that the relationship between humans and other beings is not an equal one from an ethical standpoint. It directly underlines the main problem of animal equality: humans exploit and even kill other animals for their own benefit without giving anything in return. For example, instead of using the constantly developing technology to ease or even cease animal suffering, humans have merely developed more efficient ways to breed, slaughter and process increasing numbers of animals in food production. For the animals the problem and the solution are clear: "Remove Man from the scene and the root cause of hunger and overwork is abolished for ever" (*AF* 4). This idea can be considered to be a quite posthumanist one, at least if we interpret the act of "removing man from the scene" to represent taking human beings away from their privileged position compared to other species and placing all beings on an equal level in terms of moral worth.

Major's speech also reminds the animals of the cruel fate that awaits them and takes a direct stand against the terrible position that farm animals are in:

But no animal escapes the cruel knife in the end. You young porkers who are sitting in front of me, every one of you will scream your lives out at the block within a year. To that horror we all must come – cows, pigs, hens, sheep, everyone. Even the horses and the dogs have no better fate. You, Boxer, the very day that those great muscles of yours lose their power, Jones will sell you to the knacker, who will cut your throat and boil you down for the foxhounds. As for the dogs, when they grow old and toothless, Jones ties a brick round their necks and drowns them in the nearest pond. (*AF* 5)

This statement comments on the significantly shorter lifespan of farm animals – for which the humans are responsible – compared to their natural lifespan, and it suggests that animals are seen and treated as a resource rather than fellow beings. For example, porkers, as Major

claims, are indeed slaughtered when they are no older than six months of age (Lappalainen 166). According to Erica Calvo, beef cows are usually slaughtered before they reach eighteen months, although the natural lifespan of a cow can be as high as thirty years (37). Dairy cows, on the other hand, are taken to slaughter when their milk production starts to decrease, usually by the age of six or seven years (ibid.). Chickens are killed around the age of fourteen months, while their natural lifespan is about ten years (Grant 52). Thus, Major's declaration is apt in criticizing humans.

The lyrics of "Beasts of England" – the anthem of Animalism – also indicate how the animals feel about the means of control that humans generally use: "Rings shall vanish from our noses / And the harness from our back / Bit and spur shall rust forever / Cruel whips no more shall crack" (*AF* 7). Here the text criticizes using physical violence and restraints in order to control animals, and when the animals take over the farm, they get rid of all the instruments of restraint and cruelty:

The harness-room at the end of the stables was broken open; the bits, the nose-rings, the dog-chains, the cruel knives with which Mr Jones had been used to castrate the pigs and lambs, were all flung down the well. The reins, the halters, the blinkers, the degrading nosebags, were thrown onto the rubbish fire which was burning in the yard. So were the whips. All the animals capered with joy when they saw the whips going up in flames. (*AF* 12-13)

Especially the description of knives and whips as "cruel" is a clear indication of how those objects are perceived from the animals' point of view. While for an average human a knife or even a whip can simply be a tool used for a certain task, for the animals they are instruments used for the purpose of hurting and killing them. Understanding this helps the reader to examine the text from a less human-oriented point of view and sympathize with the animal characters.

Unlike the excerpt above reported by the narrator, some of the accusations of mistreatment are stated by the animals themselves, so it could be argued that they can be

biased, but it is important to remember that in literature animals are seldom – and in real life never – given the opportunity to speak for themselves. One aspect of allegory is that it juxtaposes “a radically different alternative with the accepted perception of the world” (Hunter 165), and Orwell’s text allows us to imagine what animals might say if they were able to speak for themselves in our language. The significance of language in the story will be discussed later in more detail.

At this point it is worth mentioning that the narrator is not an all-knowing one, or at least not one that shares everything with the reader. The narrator only reports events as they are known or thought to be true by most of the farm animals – not including pigs, who know significantly more of what is going on than the other characters. Events that happen out in the open are basically reported as facts: “[The horses] knew every inch of the field, and in fact understood the business of mowing and raking far better than Jones and his men had ever done” (*AF* 17). Events happening inside the house, where no animals besides the pigs and the dogs are finally allowed, are reported as they are perceived by the animals outside:

It was a few days later than this that the pigs came upon a case of whisky in the cellars of the farmhouse. It had been overlooked at the time when the house was first occupied. That night there came from the farmhouse the sound of loud singing, in which, to everyone’s surprise, the strains of ‘Beasts of England’ were mixed up. At about half-past nine Napoleon, wearing an old bowler hat of Mr Jones’s, was distinctly seen to emerge from the back door, gallop rapidly round the yard and disappear indoors again. (*AF* 72)

The narrator does not necessarily tell lies, but does not state many facts either. There is plenty of reported speech, which means that when a character tells lies, the narrator does not correct him. He leaves the readers to draw their own conclusions on many issues. According to Hunter, the narrator is not an impartial one because “in setting the farmers off against the animals in the fourth chapter the narrator places himself firmly on the side of the animals” (181). Hunter also points out that the narrators “alignment with the other animals against the pigs by making the pigs more like humans in their speech, is a more subtle and questionable

stance” that is justified not by “what is said or implied against the pigs, but what the other animals have or lack in comparison to them” (ibid.). That is, because the other animals are not as intelligent as the pigs, the narrator sympathizes with the other animals, and perhaps invites the reader to do so as well.

#### *4.2 Animalism as an analog of humanism*

Major states in his speech that “All men are enemies” and “All animals are comrades” (*AF*, 6). Therefore, he continues, “Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy” and “Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend” (ibid.), which is later expressed by the other pigs in a maxim “Four legs good, two legs bad” that contains “the essential principle of Animalism” (*AF* 21). Doing this, they categorize humans and nonhuman animals with the same sort of “willful ignorance” that Derrida (“The Animal” 416) criticizes, using the number of legs as the defining feature, which proves to be a crucial point later on in the story. Thus, the farm animals themselves are guilty of speciesism as well, suggesting that even the defenders of animal equality are partly responsible for the problematic discourse used in discussing the animal issues. While they decide that each creature should have the right to a fulfilling life no matter how intelligent or useful they are, at the same time they categorize all creatures, besides man of course, under the same label: the animal.

Major’s advice to “Never listen when they tell you that Man and the animals have a common interest” (*AF* 5) – although true in the sense that even today humans’ interests are seldom for the good of other animals – conflicts with Wolfe’s idea that by surpassing the humanist and speciesist discourse we can get closer to equality both within and between species. Thus, although it starts off with good intentions, Animalism does not succeed in representing posthumanist ideas very well. Instead I argue that Animalism can be read as an



analog of humanism, particularly the humanist animal rights theories that initially have good intentions but that are not fully able to accomplish animal equality even in theory. As the story progresses and Animalism fails to protect a majority of the animals, it becomes even more evident that there is a similarity between Animalism and humanism. It is important to notice that although Animalism fails, it does not mean that the text denies the possibility or the need for animal equality. It rather points out the problems of Animalism and thus criticizes the humanist point of view and the speciesism that it participates in.

Whenever some of the animals have doubts about the legitimacy of the decisions made on the farm, Squealer, one of the smartest pigs, is the one who is able to persuade them to accept those decisions: “[Squealer] was a brilliant talker, and when he was arguing some difficult point he had a way of skipping from side to side and whisking his tail which was somehow very persuasive. The others said of Squealer that he could turn black into white” (*AF* 9). As mentioned above, Animalism can be interpreted to be an analog of humanism. Therefore, because Squealer is a kind of spokesperson for Animalism, he can be seen as the epitome of humanist reasoning that justifies the suffering of animals which our conscience is arguing against. In this respect the interpretations made in earlier research of the pigs as political leaders is apt as well, since the acceptance of animal oppression in the form of factory farming, for example, comes from the higher structural levels of the society: it is directly approved by legislation but also reinforced by government subsidies. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture provides commodity programs that support financially certain segments of agriculture (“FY 2016 Budget Summary” 23). Their budget for grains used for animal feeds for the fiscal year of 2016 was 5.5 billion dollars, and the budget for dairy was 62 million dollars (*ibid.*). This means that as the farmers of feed grains are able to sell their feed at a lower price to farms, making it more profitable to breed cattle or other animals, the federal government of the United States spends billions of dollars

indirectly supporting the meat industry, in addition to the millions of dollars spent directly supporting the dairy industry.

The role of the government is important also in the respect that consumers look at legislation for ethical guidance. According to a survey conducted in Texas, Illinois, and North Carolina in 2008, 69 per cent of consumers who had an opinion on the matter were in favor of “governmental bans on eggs produced under lower standards of care” (Norwood and Lusk 342-43). This suggests that people want the government to guide our eating habits to a more ethical direction, and legislative measures are seen as necessary. Although individuals can choose to eat ethically without coercive means, most people decide not to do so. If governments continue to subsidize the meat industry and not issue tougher animal welfare legislation, consumers may take it as a message that there are no ethical problems considering animal welfare or animal equality. Similarly the animals in *Animal Farm* rely on Squealer and Napoleon, their political leaders, to guide them and inform them if issues regarding the welfare of their fellow beings should appear. Unfortunately, however, the pigs are only concerned on their own welfare.

One of the most important details in the story, in terms of animal equality as well as human/animal opposition, are of course the rules of Animal Farm:

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal. (*AF* 15)

With these Seven Commandments of Animalism painted on the barn wall the animals aim to become equal so that no animal exploits another. They also want to distinguish themselves from the humans in appearance and behavior, in order avoid repeating the problems that occurred when the humans were in charge of the farm. The commandments are easily

comparable to the Ten Commandments of the Holy Bible. Especially the rule “No animal shall kill any other animal” is quite clearly analogous to “Thou shalt not kill.” The Bible’s commandment is of course generally understood not to apply to animals, and therefore the commandment is usually interpreted as “Thou shalt not kill a human being” (Wolfe, *Animal Rites* 70), although exceptions even to this rule are also sometimes justified by legislation, such as in the case of war or executions. Similarly the commandments of Animalism are one by one altered by the pigs to better serve the purpose of the pigs rather than all the animals. For example, the sixth commandment becomes “No animal shall kill any other animal *without cause*” (AF 61) after the pigs have executed several animals who have disobeyed them. The Seven Commandments can also be compared to the “rules” of humanism – especially the ones that define “what is human” – that have gradually been changed to correspond with the times, such as in the case of slavery and racial discrimination. This is again an example of Animalism having an analogy to humanism.

The executions also make the animals realize that the violence is more terrible because it is carried out by their equals: “In the old days there had often been scenes of bloodshed equally terrible, but it seemed to all of them that it was far worse now that it was happening among themselves” (AF 57). Similarly the cruelty to any animals seems even more terrible when the opposition of human/animal is deconstructed and we realize that the cruelty that is happening does not only concern some unknown other, but that it is in fact happening among ourselves.

### *4.3 The power of language*

As mentioned earlier, one of the essential themes of *Animal Farm* is language. According to Hunter, the story “is openly about politics and propaganda, specifically propagandic

language” (165), and Samir Elbarbary states that “the primacy of language” is established in the very beginning of the novel when Major gives his speech and is “reduced to a mouth” (31). The fact that Orwell gives the characters a common language is of course very important for the revolution of the animals to be possible, and later for the pigs and humans to be able to do business together. Although the idea most likely comes from the tradition of animal fables, where all creatures usually share a common language, it can also be considered to support Derrida’s argument that because language is something that man has attributed to himself, man does not have the right to deny that same attribute from an animal (“And Say the Animal Responded?” 137-38). In any case, the story gives animals the possibility to voice their opinion and feelings, albeit at different levels of complexity. In fact, Hunter considers the pigs’ ability to read and write to be “the key to their intelligence” (170) and thus fundamentally important to the story.

It is important to notice, however, that the pigs are not literate right from the beginning, but that during a few months before the rebellion “they had taught themselves to read and write from an old spelling book . . . which had been thrown on the rubbish heap” (*AF* 15). By autumn all the pigs can “already read and write perfectly” (*AF* 20). This process depicts a kind of exaggerated evolution of their mental capabilities. Based on the fact that evolution has allowed different kinds of species to develop similar features based on their need to survive in similar environments – for example the body shapes of sharks, dolphins, and penguins – and because the mental features that make humans supposedly superior to other beings are clearly the result of adapting to certain conditions of survival, it can be assumed that in the right conditions similar mental attributes would become predominant in other beings as well through natural selection (Cavalieri 78). The illustration of the mental development of the pigs in the novel, albeit unrealistic, supports the idea that other species than human may also have the kind of psychological capacity that is usually considered to be

what makes our species essentially *human*, and that it is merely a matter of chance and favorable environment that has enabled humans to utilize the full potential of that capacity. Granting the pigs – as well as some other animals – these highly evolved capabilities, the story seems to take humans from their self-assigned higher position and place them on an equal level with the other species.

By the end of the summer “almost every animal on the farm was literate in some degree” (*AF* 20). Although in the case of many animals literacy means that they only know the letter A, the text seems to suggest that language, as Wolfe (*Animal Rites* 79) suggests, is in fact a difference in degree rather than a difference in kind. Consider the following excerpt:

The dogs learned to read fairly well, but were not interested in reading anything except the Seven Commandments. Muriel, the goat, could read somewhat better than the dogs, and sometimes used to read to the others in the evenings from scraps of newspaper which she found on the rubbish heap. Benjamin [the donkey] could read as well as any pig, but never exercised his faculty. So far as he knew, he said, there was nothing worth reading. Clover learnt the whole alphabet, but could not put words together. Boxer could not get beyond the letter D. . . . Mollie refused to learn any but the five letters which spelt her own name. (*AF* 21)

The different animals have different capacities of learning and different levels of literacy, and there is variation even within the same species, as the horses Clover, Boxer, and Mollie prove. McHugh makes a good point when stating that the “animals’ efforts to learn and to teach each other how to read emphasize that species differences encompass different ranges of abilities, and . . . that not all individuals are interested in or capable of maximizing these potentials” (“*Animal Farm’s* Lessons” 29). The fact that the animals range from the human-equivalent intelligence of the pigs to the practically illiterate sheep and poultry disrupts the traditional human/animal opposition (*ibid.*).

The different capabilities of the animals are important for the story, because the level of literacy and proficiency in language is what, according to Hunter, allows the pigs to take control of the farm: “The other animals are limited in their use of language and cannot

discuss or debate issues effectively with the pigs; and since they cannot write and their memories are imperfect, they cannot check the original assumptions and decision they started from” (171). For example, when it is decided that the farm will begin trading with humans in order to acquire supplies, some animals seem to recall that Major had advised against trading and handling money. However, Squealer is able to convince the suspicious animals “that the resolution against engaging in trade and using money had never been passed, or even suggested” (*AF* 43). His strongest argument is written records: “Have you any record of such resolution? Is it written down anywhere?” (*AF* 43-44). Because no such record exists – except of course for the reader, who can check back to Major’s speech and realize that indeed “No animal must ever . . . touch money, or engage in trade” (*AF* 6) – the animals cannot prove their suspicion and therefore have no choice but to be “satisfied that they had been mistaken” (*AF* 44). The pigs, who control the means of communication and have a far more advanced rhetoric, can thus persuade and govern the other animals according to their will.

Altering the Commandments is of course another way in which the pigs take advantage of language for their self-interest. However, even before the pigs begin rewriting the Commandments and perverting facts, the other animals have little influence on common issues on the farm:

After the hoisting of the flag all the animals trooped into the big barn for a general assembly which was known as the Meeting. Here the work of the coming week was planned out and resolutions were put forward and debated. It was always the pigs who put forward the resolutions. The other animals understood how to vote, but could never think of any resolutions of their own. (*AF* 19)

At this point the other animals still have a chance to be involved in making decisions. However, as the story develops and Snowball is banished from the farm by Napoleon and his watchdogs (*AF* 35-36), allowing Napoleon to assume dictatorship of the farm, the little democracy left in managing the farm is taken away:

[Napoleon] announced that from now on Sunday-morning Meetings would come to an end. They were unnecessary, he said, and wasted time. In the future all questions relating to the working of the farm would be settled by a special committee of pigs, presided over by himself. These would meet in private and afterwards communicate their decisions to the others. (*AF* 36)

The decision that “there would be no more debates” (*ibid.*) results in the majority of animals not having any say in the decisions relating to their own lives. The situation resembles the contractarian model of ethics discussed earlier. In this case, instead of humans, the pigs are the once making the contract and excluding from it all the other animals, who are unable to protest because of their inability to remember facts and rationalize their concerns. The issue might not be as problematic if the pigs made decisions based on the common interests of all the animals and considered their lives to be of equal value, but this is not the case. Napoleon’s decision to order the dogs after Snowball already proves that he is prepared to use force and neglect the wellbeing of others to improve his personal situation.

According to Hunter “the events in the book cannot be helped because of the limited nature of animals” (167), as if the pigs were acting on some intuition that forces them to oppress the other animals. I argue that instead of some essential condition – an issue that will be discussed further in the following section – driving them into a position of power that they can abuse, it is their excellence in language that allows them to take advantage of the discourse that puts the pigs in a superior position. The pigs ultimately start walking on two legs and change the maxim of Animalism to “Four legs good, two legs *better*” (89), which proves that they have realized how a difference in kind can be used to establish superiority. Hunter also considers the point of the story to be that since humans are not as limited intellectually as the animals, we “have a responsibility to ensure that these events do not happen in [our] world” (167). Although Hunter of course means that we should not allow other humans – dictators, governments – to oppress us, the story can equally be interpreted as

telling us that we should work towards deconstructing similar scenarios of oppression, which have been and still are happening between humans and animals.

Elbarbary summarizes his own view the problem of linguistic and intellectual variation within the animals:

One may ask whether it makes any sense to represent all animals as a single community. Can a mass society divided by a wide range of linguistic variation and differences in intelligence, among others, be said to hold a single doctrine? Pan-animalism cannot be a reality. It becomes apparent at the end of the novel that the pigs have firmly secured their position. The inference is that a shadow of doubt is thrown on a second insurrectionary round as long as the linguistic oligarchy will sustain their exploitation of the animals through the monopoly of language. (37)

Elbarbary is right in questioning pan-animalism, if we take pan-animalism to mean the kind of forceful labeling of all animals under one term. However, a society of creatures with different intellectual capabilities can still have a single doctrine, if the essence of that doctrine is for every creature to live a meaningful life. This is included in the doctrine “All animals are equal” (*AF* 15), which is the last of the Seven Commandments and the only one that remains at the end of the story – although with the ironical addition that “some animals are more equal than others” (*AF* 90). This idea of each life being as valuable as the next is not realized in the novel because the pigs want to abuse their position rather than to hold on the doctrine that called for equality for all animals, but rather than suggesting that it can never happen in real life, the story can be interpreted as encouraging us to rethink the “monopoly of language” that humans at the moment possess and how that monopoly is used to dismiss the animal others.

#### *4.4 Essentialism*

As discussed in the theory section, defining a human or animal essence is practically impossible and therefore a certain label, or especially privileges attached to that label, should



not be given to one species if not given to the other. For the same reasons the numerous animal species differing from each other to varying degrees should not be categorized under one label such as the animal or animality. Still, Peter Firchow suggests that the story of *Animal Farm* “becomes one of nature rather than nurture, of the essential ‘animal condition,’ as seen especially from the donkey Benjamin’s point of view” (105). Essentialism is definitely a recurring theme in the novel, but again rather than suggesting that essentialism is what determines the course of life, it can be argued that the text is questioning the logic of essentialism and the idea that there is some definite inner factor that makes a being an animal, or human accordingly.

Some of the vocabulary in the text is curious in terms of the animal question. For example, the word “beast” appears in *Animal Farm* on a few occasions. The narrator uses it twice to describe the characteristics of horses. In the first chapter Boxer is characterized as “an enormous beast, nearly eighteen hands high, and as strong as any two ordinary horses put together” but “not of the first-rate intelligence” (*AF* 2). In the final chapter two new horses are described as being “fine upstanding beasts, willing workers and good comrades, but very stupid” (*AF* 85). In both of these examples the words “beast” is used in a kind of positive light, describing the grand appearance of these animals. In fact, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in parts of England “beast” is used to refer specifically to a horse (“Beast”). However, the word has several other definitions that range from “A domesticated animal” and “A quadruped” to “The animal nature (in humans),” a stupid or loathsome person, and even the Antichrist, whereas the phrase “wild beast” is used to describe “an animal not domesticated, . . . now [especially] a ferocious animal from a foreign land” (ibid.). Therefore, although mainly used in positive or neutral descriptions in *Animal Farm*, the word still holds certain negative connotations, and especially when combined with a description of

low intelligence in both cases, “beast” can easily suggest an idea of an untamed, mindless, and possibly dangerous animal.

The animals themselves of course use the word “beast” in the title and lyrics of “Beasts of England”:

Beasts of England, beasts of Ireland,  
Beasts of every land and clime,  
Hearken to my joyful tidings  
Of the golden future time

Soon or late the day is coming,  
Tyrant Man shall be o’erthrown,  
And the fruitful fields of England  
Shall be trod by beasts alone (*AF* 7)

Here the word is clearly used by the animals to refer to themselves and any other animals in the country. Although the word has negative connotations, the fact that the animals themselves use it can be seen as an attempt for the animals to reclaim the word and clear it from its negative meanings, much like certain groups of people have adopted offensive terms that have been used to refer to themselves by other people. The negative connotation of “beast” is much more apparent when humans use it to refer to animals, as opposed to the animals using it to refer to themselves, and Orwell’s decision to have the animals use the word “beast” is definitely not a coincidence. In fact, “beastly” was not only George Orwell’s first recorded word but also “a word that he continued to use a great deal . . . . ‘Fascist Beasts’ popped up everywhere in his journalism, not always in ironical quotation marks” (Drabble 39). Calling a person a “fascist beast” is of course reinforcing the discourse that disdains animals because it associates fascism with beastliness, with being an animal, and also suggests that the beastliness, or *animality*, of a person is what makes him cruel or bad. In *Animal Farm*, on the other hand, Orwell can be seen to be playing with the idea of what kind of meanings the word beast has and trying to show that the animals are in fact not the senseless creatures, the beasts, as the reader first might think of them. The animals are

generally shown to be thinking and feeling beings, but the pigs and dogs, who adapt human behavior – and perhaps also the human “beastliness” – to the greatest extent, are the only nonhuman beings who show evidence of cruel behavior. For example, even though Boxer is described as “an enormous beast,” he is also “respected for his steadiness of character” (*AF* 2). Boxer and Clover also show kindness and consideration towards other beings as they move “their vast hairy hoofs with great care lest there should be some small animal concealed in the straw” (*ibid.*). Boxer even feels sorry for a human he accidentally kills in a battle: “‘I have no wish to take life, not even human life,’ repeated Boxer, and his eyes were full of tears.” (*AF* 28). Snowball’s response to Boxer’s sentimentality is “‘War is war. The only good human is a dead one.’” (*ibid.*) Napoleon proves to be quite cruel even to animals, including his fellow species, and he declares death sentences to several animals, using the dogs as his executioners (*AF* 55-56). By the end of the novel the pigs have started to use whips to control the other animals (*AF* 90), even though the lyrics of “Beasts of England” earlier declared that “Cruel whips no more shall crack” (*AF* 7). This shows that the most dangerous – as well as most unreliable – animals are in fact the ones who resemble humans the most. Questioning the beastliness of animals and the humanity of humans can be regarded as questioning essentialism rather than complying with it.

According to Wolfe “concepts of nature are always inseparable from those of human nature” (*Animal Rites* 13), and the words *natural* and *nature* do appear in *Animal Farm* on several occasions. For example, when Major states in his speech that he understands “the nature of life on this earth as well as any animal now living” and denies that the poor situation of animals is “simply part of the order of Nature” (*AF* 3). This kind of reference to nature and the idea that it is normal and somehow unavoidable that the animals are exploited by humans are good examples of the speciesism and the problematic use of the term *natural* that needs to be addressed. The word *natural* often has the suggested meaning that something

needs no further rationalization, making the word problematic especially in defining how species behave or should behave (Clark 69). Major also declares that “even the miserable lives we lead are not allowed to reach their natural span” (*AF* 5). Doing this he introduces an alternate view of what is natural, as opposed to the one mentioned earlier. The question that one may ask is whether it is natural to live a free life and die of whatever cause – old age, disease, accident, hunted down – or to be born in captivity and live a short life with the purpose of being killed for nutrition for another being. Either definition can surely, from a certain perspective, be considered to be natural, which demonstrates the controversy related to the term. If anything can be considered natural, does the term hold any meaning whatsoever?

The idea of *natural* appears also in the conversations between the owners of adjacent farms. They believe that the animals have resorted to cannibalism and other gruesome acts and that it “was what came of rebelling against the laws of Nature” (*AF* 25), suggesting that it is unnatural for the animals to survive without humans to watch over them. The farmers’ gossip about cannibalism – that the animals would not survive on the farm without eating other animals – also reflects the general attitude many laymen have about eating meat: that human beings will not survive without eating other – albeit nonhuman – animals. Eating meat is still often considered to be essential for human survival, and therefore natural, even in the industrialized countries where other nutrition is easily available. Furthermore, although the issue is controversial, it is worth noting that a myth of cannibalism was allegedly used in European colonialist countries as an excuse for colonizing foreign areas and suppressing or even killing the ‘savages’ that were the indigenous people (Obeyesekere 63-64). Similarly the farmers’ hearsay could justify a human intervention in the farm, since in their view the animals are not able to get along without humans. Ironically the farmers who spread the horrific rumors of farm animals eating each other would without a doubt have no objection to

a human being, such as themselves, eating the animals in question. In terms of animal equality it does not really matter if you are being killed by someone of your own species or of another species, and therefore the farmers are clearly not in favor of animal equality. The text, however, can be read to support the opposite of the unsympathetic and malicious farmers' opinions and their ideas of what is natural, suggesting that animal equality and mutual respect between species would be a better option.

Speciesism is apparent throughout the book, especially in the actions of the pigs, since the animals are categorized based on their species: the pigs become leaders because they are “*generally* recognized as being the cleverest of the animals” (*AF* 9, emphasis added) and “With their superior knowledge it was *natural* that they should assume leadership” (*AF* 17, emphasis added). This is an example of treating individuals based on what is typical of their kind, similar to what Paola Cavalieri (77) criticizes when she questions the idea of *human nature* – that certain behavior is *natural* for humans. Because of the abilities of their species, the pigs and the dogs in *Animal Farm* are allowed to live in the farm house – pigs as the smart leaders and dogs as their intimidating guards – while all the other animals live in the barn. The pigs are also allowed to exclusively have the milk and apples produced on the farm because they call themselves “brainworkers” and, as Squealer explains to the other animals, it has been “proved by Science” that milk and apples “contain substances absolutely necessary to the well-being of a pig” (*AF* 23). Similar faulty reasoning is often used when defending why it is necessary for humans to drink cow milk. For example, The Dairy Council, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing information about dairy products, claims milk to have several health benefits, such as strengthening one's bones and teeth, and reducing the risk of high blood pressure, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and both colorectal and breast cancer (“Health Benefits of Milk”), while at the same time studies have shown milk to increase the probability of prostate and ovarian cancer, multiple sclerosis, high cholesterol levels, acne,

and possibly type 1 diabetes (Campbell). While it is uncertain whether the benefits outweigh the risks, it can be argued that milk is not absolutely vital or even good for one's well-being.

The intelligence of the pigs is mentioned several times throughout the novel, perhaps to highlight the irony of the reasoning that because some species are more intelligent than others, they should be allowed act in a way that is clearly selfish, as the pigs do in the case of the milk and apples. Thus, the novel comments on the inequality of the different species, suggesting that the state of things is unjust and should be changed. In this sense as well *Animal Farm* can be seen to support animal equality.

#### *4.5 Human attributes in animals*

As stated before, if a text describes a nonhuman animal going through a thought process or having feelings of affection or fear, and we label this as anthropomorphism, we are then making the assumption that those thoughts or feelings are definitely attributes of human beings only, most likely without knowing whether the animal in question actually possesses similar attributes. However, as the pigs in *Animal Farm* evolve throughout the novel to the final stage where it becomes impossible for the other animals to distinguish them from humans, it is clear that much of the behavior of the pigs is, if not anthropomorphic, at least meant to remind the reader of human behavior. It is important to remember that because the range of non-human animals is so diverse and because their emotional and cognitive potential still remain unknown to a large extent, any narrative representation of non-humans is bound to be based on mainly factitious or human conceit (Norris 4). Therefore such human-centered assumptions are difficult to avoid.

The binary opposition of human/animal is constantly present in *Animal Farm*. Major states in his speech that “in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him” (*AF* 6).

However, like other initially well-meaning principles of Animalism, this too is quickly overlooked. For example, the pigs move to live in the farm house, begin to sleep in beds, and start drinking alcohol. These are all examples of the pigs – the smartest animals of the farm and possessing the most human-like characteristics – giving themselves special privileges. The scenario can be read as a criticism of the traditional animal rights theories that wish to grant rights – special privileges – to animals whose mental properties are closest to humans. The pigs end up ruining the animal utopia because they are just as bad as the humans initially were, which also resembles the traditional animal rights theories having good intentions but being unable to succeed in creating animal equality, because they are still basically human-centered. On the other hand, the pigs can also be compared to humans in general, and their actions can be seen to criticize the way we humans separate ourselves from nonhuman animals based on our assumed superior mental capacities. Either way, the novel draws attention to the problems of the human/animal opposition and the empathy given to animals based on how much they resemble humans.

Initially the pigs, like all the animals, are trying to resist the anthropomorphism that so commonly is read in any animal fiction. Perhaps this is why one of the main ideas of Animalism is that “Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy” and “Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend” (6). The point of these statements may not simply be to distinguish the bipedal humans – let us accept that the farm animals are not aware of other bipedal animals, such as kangaroos – but to encourage the animal characters to remain in their current animal state and not transform to anthropomorphic creatures. Finally, however, the pigs are unable to resist the literary tradition. Their transformation to humans is in fact a kind of reverse process of something called transmogrification. Transmogrification, “a special case of anthropomorphism” where people morph into animals, “has a long and respected history in many world cultures” (Burke and Copenhaver 2007). Therefore, the

transformation of the pigs, as well as their initial hostility towards anthropomorphism, function as gentle critique of the literary tradition of having animals and animality represent human issues.

On the subject of resisting anthropomorphism, Susan McHugh also points out that the puppies adopted by Napoleon and brought up to be his watchdogs “remain dogs, serving not as extension serving not as extensions of anyone’s ego or symbols of any people but rather (in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms) as a ‘demonic’ and irreducible figure of animal multiplicity, inaugurating the pigs’ campaign of terror against the likewise-transformed meat animals” (*Animal Stories* 182-83). McHugh considers that this point of view makes “both metaphorical and anthropomorphic projection” of the story much more restricted (*ibid.*). Having the dogs serve the pigs and provide a deterrent for the other animals so that they refrain from protesting differs little from the tradition of pitting animals against each other by using shepherd dogs to control sheep or watchdogs to guard hens against foxes or other small predators. Furthermore, as Donna Haraway points out, dogs have also been used as “lethal guided weapons and instruments of terror” by conquistadors against the indigenous peoples of the Americas (13). A comparison can easily be made between this example of humans using dogs to terrorize members of their own species and Napoleon using his dogs to terrorize the other animals, including pigs. First Napoleon orders the dogs to attack Snowball (*AF* 35-36), and later they carry out the executions of four pigs – as well as several other animals – who are accused of conspiring with Snowball (*AF* 56).

Orwell’s decision to put the pigs in charge of the farm is a question that may have two different reasons. Rodden believes that Orwell’s choice is based on cultural stereotypes: “Pigs have a bad name for selfishness and gluttony” (72). Portraying the pigs as selfish and lazy is therefore supporting this negative stereotype. On the other hand, according to Singer (119), Orwell’s decision is supported by scientific evidence as well: “Of all the animals



commonly eaten in the Western world, the pig is without doubt the most intelligent” (119). For example, in support of Singer’s claim, Lori Marino and Christina M. Colvin have “identified a number of findings from studies of pig cognition, emotion, and behavior which suggest that pigs possess complex ethological traits similar, but not identical, to dogs and chimpanzee” (15).

The pigs’ decision to keep the milk for themselves (*AF* 16) is crucial because it shows that they consider themselves to be privileged over the other animals, and are able to convince the other animals as well: “The importance of keeping the pigs in good health was all too obvious. So it was agreed without further argument that the milk and the windfall apples (and also the main crop of apples when they ripened) should be reserved for the pigs alone” (*AF* 23). The pigs are thus also the only animals on the farm reported to consume animal-based food after the humans are banished. The decisions the pigs make concerning the farm also resemble human behavior in the sense that they are quite selfish as well as profit-oriented. A nationwide survey conducted in the United States in 2007 showed that 64 per cent of consumers believed farmers and food companies to “put their own profits ahead of treating farm animals humanely” (Norwood and Lusk 343). Similarly the pigs put profits ahead of the welfare of the other animals. For example, selling eggs to humans is protested by the hens, but they are sold anyway (*AF* 51). According to the pigs, of course, this should benefit the whole farm (*ibid.*). However, selling Boxer to the glue-maker is a trade that the pigs do not even admit to the other animals (82-83), yet “somewhere or other the pigs had acquired the money to buy themselves another case of whisky” (*AF* 84). A final commentary on the pigs’ tendency to put profit before the wellbeing of their fellow animals comes from Mr. Pilkington, who is amazed at how cost-efficiently Napoleon runs the farm: “[Pilkington] believed that he was right in saying that the lower animals on Animal Farm did more work and received less food than any animals in the county” (*AF* 92). This efficiency earns

Napoleon the respect of the human farmers, which implies that earning as large a profit as possible, regardless of animal welfare, is indeed a policy approved by farmers, or even humans in general. On the other hand, buying the whiskey as well as not sharing the milk earlier in the story (*AF* 51) are decisions that the pigs make most likely based on their preferred taste and regardless of common good. In this respect the pigs also show similar negligence as human consumers who care more about the taste of their food than the welfare of animals: according Elina Lappalainen (22), taste and price are both more important factors than animal welfare to a majority of consumers when making decisions about food. Therefore, in several different ways, the text draws comparisons between the pigs' adopted behavior and the behavior of many humans.

Some of the animals in *Animal Farm*, who perhaps have the least humanlike attributes, are clearly given less significance, even by the narrator. These are mostly animals that live in herds or flocks, for example sheep, hens, and ducks – “the stupider animals” (*AF* 21). Wolfe calls these animals *animalized animals*, whereas pets and other animals with “ostensibly human features” are called *humanized animals* (*Animal Rites* 225). The decision to give names to some animals and not to others may be in order to emphasize that some animals resemble humans more than others, especially in terms of intelligence. For example, the sheep, who are not named, cannot learn more than one letter of the alphabet, whereas Muriel the goat is quite literate (*AF* 20). The ducks and hens, who also remain unnamed, are as illiterate as the sheep (*ibid.*), whereas a raven living on the farm has been given the name Moses. Although nothing is said of his literacy, Moses is described as “a clever talker” (*AF* 10), and according to Marzluff, Angell, and Ehrlich, corvids generally have “exceptional memory and intelligence” (40). If it is perceived that some of the animals are left unnamed because of their low intelligence or lack of other human attributes, then it can be interpreted that the animals are not treated as equal. The hens, for example, are always addressed as a

group rather than individuals, and it is unclear whether they actually have names or not. It seems that the other animals also treat them as a unified group. Even when the hens protest against selling their eggs and afterwards are executed for their disobedience, they are not cited in direct speech or referred to as individuals:

When the hens heard this they raised a terrible outcry. They had been warned earlier that this sacrifice might be necessary, but had not believed that it would really happen. They were just getting their clutches ready for spring sitting, and they protested that to take the eggs away now was murder. For the first time since the expulsion of Jones there was something resembling a rebellion. Led by three young Black Minorca pullets, the hens made a determined effort to thwart Napoleon's wishes. Their method was to fly up to the rafters and there lay their eggs, which smashed to pieces on the floor. Napoleon acted swiftly and ruthlessly. He ordered the hens' rations to be stopped, and decreed that any animal giving so much as a grain of corn to a hen should be punished by death. (*AF* 51)

However, although the narration treats these animals with less significance, it is easy for the reader to sympathize with them rather than the humanized pigs who assume leading role on the farm. Scenes such as this can be taken as a reminder that even the smaller, less human-like, and seemingly insignificant animals deserve to be treated with respect.

However, naming the animals can also be interpreted in another way. First we have to consider a statement by Derrida: "*Animal* is a word that men have given themselves the right to give" ("The Animal" 400), meaning that man has granted himself the right to call animals as animals. As the validity of this self-granted right can be questioned, we can also question whether a name given to an individual animal – such as a horse – by a human being is meaningful to anyone but the human being. Therefore, we can argue that the animals on the farm are not in fact named by Jones, but by themselves, because in the novel the names are used by the narrator and the animals themselves, but never by Jones. In fact, it is explained in the very beginning of the novel that the farm's "prize Middle White boar" was always referred to as Major "though the name under which he had been exhibited was Willingdon Beauty" (*AF* 1). Major having two names – perhaps one given to him by Jones and another

by his mother – would also support the interpretation that the humans may call the animals by different names than the ones used by the narrator. Derrida also states that “Finding oneself deprived of language, one loses the power to name, to name oneself, indeed to respond to one's name” (“The Animal” 388). The animals in the story who are left unnamed are the ones who are practically illiterate and have lower language capabilities in general. Therefore, the animals with lower intelligence or lower language skills – the ones “deprived of language” – are unable to name themselves, at least from a human perspective, and their fellow animals do not consider themselves to have right to name them, as it would be as oppressive as the human naming the animal. In this respect, then, leaving some of the animals unnamed would support the idea of animal equality and interspecies diversity as well as criticize the human/animal opposition and human superiority.

As it was discussed earlier, the animals have different degrees of intelligence and literacy, which suggests that their intelligence should not be defined by their species. However, as explained above, this is exactly what the narrator does by treating the “stupider” animals as groups, and the pigs are also guilty of this form of speciesism. Based on their level of literacy, Muriel and Benjamin are both intelligent but they are not given the same privileges as the pigs. They are not asked to be involved in running the farm, perhaps because they are of the wrong species – that is, not pigs. Again, the pigs excluding other animals because of their species can be related to the speciesism practiced by humans in real life. Although some individuals are excluded from the privileged group, the text still suggests that they should be given the respect of being treated in a morally responsible way. The desire for that kind of moral responsibility is expressed in the vision – which at this point has already shattered – of the horse Clover: “If she herself had had any picture of the future, it had been of a society of animals set free from hunger and the whip, all equal, each working according to his capacity, the strong protecting the weak, as she had protected the lost brood of

ducklings with her foreleg on the night of Major's speech" (*AF* 58). In Clover's view the fact that each animal has *some* capacity and thus some importance is enough to guarantee equal treatment for all animals. In fact, in the beginning everyone did work "according to his capacity" (*AF* 18) and it had been enough to be treated as an equal member of their animal society. She also sees superiority – in this case physical strength – as a basis for moral responsibility towards the weaker animals: if one is able to protect another who is threatened, then one has the direct responsibility, as well as a genuine desire, to do so.

Tool-use is an important attribute that is traditionally considered to be a human skill, although many other animals have been documented to utilize tools as well. Although in *Animal Farm* "no animal was able to use any tool that involved standing on his hind legs" (*AF* 17) it is implied that the animals do know how to use certain tools. The horses are able to perform "mowing and raking" using "the cutter or the horse-rake" (*ibid.*). Later, when the animals are unable to use crowbars or picks to break stones for building the windmill – which itself is the ultimate tool for the animals to manage – they instead use rope and utilize gravity to solve their problem: "The animals lashed rope round these [boulders], and then all together, cows, horses, sheep, any animal that could lay hold of the rope . . . they dragged them with desperate slowness up the slope to the top of the quarry, where they were toppled over the edge, to shatter to pieces below" (*AF* 41). These examples of the animals using tools in spite of their physical restrictions are an acknowledgement of nonhuman intelligence and a fine commentary on the similarities of human and animal inventiveness. Although this is a fictional scenario, it does direct our attention to animal tool use and problem solving in real life. There are plenty of examples of animals using outside objects to achieve certain goals, such as chimpanzees using a stick to clean each other's teeth or a flattened stone to crack nuts (Hansell 181-82), a wasp mother using a stone "to hammer down the soil" over the entrance

of a chamber where her egg is buried (ibid. 187), as well as “an Egyptian vulture . . . picking up a stone and dropping it on to an ostrich egg” (ibid. 188).

Although the seemingly endless process of building the windmill and its subtle connotation of Don Quixote, intentional or not, may be suggesting that the struggle of the animals is futile, the windmill also makes a point about the meaning of technology for the animal issues. According to McHugh “the never-completed windmill, the symbol of a technological utopia, fails to deliver the animals from exploitation as workers and instead becomes the means by which the pigs take the human role of working the animals to death” (*Animal Stories* 183). Similarly, while the vast development in technology during the past century has made animal labor in farming unnecessary and enabled efficient production of nutritious food without animal-based ingredients, technology has also enabled factory farming and multiplied the number of animals being killed for food each day. The windmill thus functions as a reminder that technology can be either a threat or a possibility, depending on who is in the position to use it. In the final chapter the windmill is finally ready but the animals, other than pigs of course, are unable to enjoy the technological advancement it provides: “The windmill had been successfully completed at last, and the farm possessed a threshing machine and a hay elevator of its own, and various new buildings had been added to it. . . . The windmill, however, had not after all been used for generating electrical power. It was used for milling corn and brought in a handsome money profit” (*AF* 86).

In the final chapter the pigs start increasingly to resemble humans when they stand upright and start walking on their hind legs:

There was a deadly silence. Amazed, terrified, huddling together, the animals watched the long line of pigs march slowly round the yard. It was as though the world had turned upside-down. Then there came a moment when the first shock had worn off and when in spite of everything – in spite of their terror of the dogs, and of the habit, developed through long years, of never complaining, never criticizing, no matter what happened – they might have

uttered some words of protest. But just at that moment, as though at a signal, all the sheep burst out into a tremendous bleating of –

‘Four legs good, two legs *better*! Four legs good, two legs *better*! Four legs good, two legs *better*!’ (AF 89)

To avoid any protest from the other animals, the pigs have trained the sheep to chant this new maxim of the farm. This once more suggests that the pigs consider human attributes as a credit that puts them in a more privileged position than other animals. In doing this the novel again criticizes speciesism. The extract also exemplifies how the less developed species is taken advantage of in order to reinforce the status of the more developed species. Critics of animal equality also tend to rely on the less developed mental attributes of some species – and even apply it to any animals in general – to prove their point of the human superiority. Again the reader’s sympathy is directed to the dumbfounded animals, who are left with the feeling that they are being deceived by the pigs. Although Elbarbary sees “the animals’ learning disabilities” as a barrier to a better life, he does note that

there are a few oblique hints that the animals are not merely mindless beasts. They do have minds, they do think as we read that ‘they reasoned’ (78), and that they have ‘the thought that at least he [Boxer] had died happy’ (84), they also remember the issue of the pension field (85). This makes their betrayal all the more poignant since they are aware (if only obliquely) of what is happening to them. (37)

Elbarbary is right, not only in that also the other animals are conscious and thinking beings, but that their consciousness and intelligence, no matter how small a degree, makes the pigs’ oppressive and unequal leadership unacceptable.

As discussed above, none of the animals are able to use certain tools that require standing on their hind legs. However, when the pigs start walking upright, their front limbs are finally free to new kinds of functions: “the pigs who were supervising the work of the farm all carried whips in their trotters” (AF 90).

While the pigs have learned to walk upright, the Seven Commandments of Animal Farm have also been replaced with a single commandment: “ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL /

BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS” (AF 90). This phrase sarcastically summarizes the whole issue of animal equality at the moment. The problem is not just that humans have put themselves in a privileged position over other animals – although it is the most crucial issue, since it indirectly causes the other problems – but that humans also put certain animals with most human-like characteristics in that same privileged position while other animals, intelligent or not, are considered less important. The new commandment is used as justification for any further privilege that the pigs grant themselves:

After that it did not seem strange when next day the pigs who were supervising the work of the farm all carried whips in their trotters. It did not seem strange to learn that the pigs had bought themselves a wireless set, were arranging to install a telephone, and had taken out subscriptions to *John Bull*, *TitBits*, and the *Daily Mirror*. It did not seem strange when Napoleon was seen strolling in the farmhouse garden with a pipe in his mouth | no, not even when the pigs took Mr. Jones's clothes out of the wardrobes and put them on, Napoleon himself appearing in a black coat, ratcatcher breeches, and leather leggings, while his favourite sow appeared in the watered silk dress which Mrs. Jones had been used to wear on Sundays. (AF 90)

No other arguments are needed anymore. Also, the fact that the pigs start using whips when they stand upright is curious. Instead of picks, crowbars, and other tools that require one to stand upright that were discussed earlier in the novel, they choose to use a tool of controlling and oppressing rather than tools of creating and building, and this is basically enabled by the fact that the pigs finally have free front limbs. I do not use the word hands because the narrator does not either: he continues to use the word trotter. The matter can be addressed in regard to Martin Heidegger’s idea that only humans have hands: “Apes, for example, have organs that can grasp, but they have no hand” (qtd. in Derrida, “*Geschlecht II: Heidegger’s Hand*” 173). Derrida considers the core of Heidegger’s argumentation – and distinction between the human hand and animal paws or trotters – to be “reducible to the assured opposition of *giving* and *taking*: man’s hand *gives and gives itself, gives and is given*, like thought or like what gives itself to be thought and what we do not yet think , whereas the



organ of the ape or of man as a simple animal . . . can only *take hold of, grasp, lay hands on the thing*” (ibid. 175). The opposition of giving and taking, thus, only permits the human “the possibility of giving” (ibid. 175-76). The fact that the narrator does not refer to the pigs’ trotters as hands emphasizes that the pigs, although behaving in a manner resembling humans, are still pigs and not humans. However, the fact that they use their trotters not only to grasp or take hold of things, but to give orders and give themselves the power over the other animals does suggest that they do have, despite of not being human, the capabilities that Heidegger would only grant to humans. Here, again, the text blurs the division between human and animal, and emphasizes the diversity of the nonhuman species.

The maxim “Four legs good, two legs bad” (*AF* 21) may actually indicate that Orwell wanted to emphasize the animals’ intelligence. Although starting to walk upright on two legs is perhaps considered one of the most important phases in human evolution, but it is also possible that Orwell got the idea to pay attention to the number of legs from Rousseau, who writes that “A primitive [man] could consider his right and his left leg separately, or consider them together as one indivisible pair, without ever thinking of them as *two* [legs]. For the representational idea of an object is one thing, but the numerical idea that determines it is another” (qtd. in de Man 154). Orwell could then be suggesting that the animals are not merely primitive beings but intelligent creature capable of cognitive thinking. The fact that the animals use the number of legs to identify who is a friend and who is an enemy is even more interesting because, according to De Man, this ability to identify sameness through numerical thinking is in fact related to the foundation of society:

the invention of the word man makes it possible for ‘men’ to exist by establishing the equality within inequality, the sameness within difference of civil society, in which the suspended, potential truth of the original fear is domesticated by the illusion of identity. The concept interprets the metaphor of numerical sameness as if it were a statement of literal fact. Without this liberalization, there could be no society. (155)

Therefore, “human specificity may be rooted in linguistic deceit” (ibid. 156), just as the specificity of the pigs is in *Animal Farm*. Not only are the other animals literally deceived through linguistic means by the pigs, but also their maxim and its subsequent version are proof that they have been deceived all along. They have let themselves believe that the numerical difference of legs can actually be used to determine what is good and what is bad, who is a friend and who is an enemy, who are same and who are different.

Another detail that implies that Orwell may have been familiar with Rousseau’s work is the idea that “in the fictions [tableaux] of humanity everyone must be able to recognize Man” and that “every human figure must possess the common traits shared by all men, otherwise the fiction [tableau] is worthless” (Rousseau qtd. in de Man 197). The first five of the Seven Commandments are an example of the animals’ need to be able to recognize man, as they reduce the idea of man into very simple “common traits” that are supposedly shared by all men, which seems like a commentary against Rousseau’s essentialist philosophy:

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol. (*AF* 15)

The animals’ simple division of beings into those with four legs and to those with two legs makes the initial distinction, in addition to which they forbid themselves from behaving or dressing up like humans in order not to blur the boundaries. Of course, when the pigs start bending the rules and adopting some of the humanlike behavior, including oppression over the other animals, it becomes increasingly difficult for the other animals to make the distinction. This becomes apparent, for example, in the fact that the animals are no longer sure whether the farm was a better place under human management: “there were times when it seemed to the animals that they worked longer hours and fed no better than they had done in Jones’s day” (*AF* 61). Squealer’s function is to remind the animals of the fading distinction

between humans and animals, which is manifested in the animals' minds in the distinction between Manor Farm and Animal Farm. Although the animals' rations are constantly reduced, Squealer manages to explain, with the help of his documentation, that "in comparison with the days of Jones the improvement was enormous" (*AF* 75).

What Williams considers to be unique about *Animal Farm* in comparison to Orwell's other work, is that it is not a story about a typical Orwell character, an "isolated man who breaks from conformity but is then defeated and reabsorbed" (73) but rather, in McHugh's words, a depiction of "a collectively distributed consciousness-raising that at the end shifts sympathy to the other animals" (*Animal Stories* 183). The sympathy towards animals is of course the essential message of the novel, in regards to the animal question. According to Hunter, when "the pigs begin to take up more and more foolish human activities, and as the other animals are relegated to a passive role because of their inability to communicate, the reader draws back from identification" (166-167). Thus, as the human reader feels less identification with the animal characters, it becomes clearer to the reader that the characters are in fact animals and not some animalized representations of humans. Yet at the same time as this distinction between the reader and the characters takes place, the reader still continues to empathize with the oppressed animals, debunking the significance of species for moral subjectivity.

Changing the farms name from Animal Farm back to the original Manor Farm in the final chapter represents the return to the starting point: misery and mistreatment of non-human and non-swine animals. Similarly, posthumanism emphasizes that following the humanist animal rights theories to improve animal equality will only lead to another state of inequality. An interesting statement is made when the pigs have human visitors: "That evening loud laughter and bursts of singing came from the farmhouse. And suddenly, at the sound of the mingled voices, the animals were stricken with curiosity. What could be

happening in there, now that for the first time *animals and human beings were meeting on terms of equality?*” (AF 91) (emphasis added). It is unclear whether it is the animals or the narrator who asks the question, but it is curious that the pigs are referred to as “animals” in general, and not simply pigs. The party meeting with humans “on terms of equality” does not actually represent all the animals, but only the one privileged species, whose equality with the humans necessarily suggests a speciesist attitude towards the other, unequal species. If the statement is the narrator reporting the animals actual thought, it would suggest that the other animals do not yet realize that they are being treated unequally compared to the pigs; they still see themselves and the pigs as one equal group of species, whereas the humans are the one privileged species. The pigs’ relation to the other animals is expressed in a comment made by Mr. Pilkington, one of the human visitors: “‘If you have your lower animals to contend with,’ he said ‘we have our lower classes!’” (AF 92). Although this comment clearly supports the traditional allegorical reading of the novel, where the other animals symbolize the working class, but the phrase “lower animals” and their contemptuous attitude towards the labor – the comment sets “the table in a roar” (AF 93) – suggests that both the humans and the pigs consider the other animals to be less important based on their species.

When the animals creep up to the window to observe what is going on inside the farmhouse, their vision of a unity and equality between all nonhuman species is shattered: “The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again: but already it was impossible to say which was which” (AF 95). The final sentence of the novel is almost like a rhetorical question disguised as a statement: “How can we tell a man from beast?” Here I use the term “beast” because presumably the ending is supposed to suggest the essentialist idea that human nature has its dark side, its animal side, which makes man do inhumane things. From a posthumanist point of view, on the other hand, it is suggesting that the defining aspects of the supposed ideas of human or animal nature are not

restricted to any specific species, which means that such ideas do not actually exist. The statement at the end of the novel implies that any living being has certain vicious or selfish qualities, but that those qualities do not define the beings status as a human or non-human.

The ending raises two other issues regarding the animal question. First, it suggests that humans are indeed not that different from other animals, just as Cavalieri among others points out: because human beings share over 98 per cent of our DNA with the pigmy chimpanzee, some authors have suggested that we belong in the same genus with the pigmy and common chimpanzees, denying any categorical separation between human beings and other species (78). Second, it denotes the problems of treating animals as sorts of lesser versions of humans, as some animal rights philosophies do. The pigs are accepted to the higher cast of species because they achieve a certain level of humanlike characteristics, whereas the “lower animals” remain in the caste of the animal. Wolfe points out the same problems in an applicable situation regarding granting rights to great apes on the grounds that they resemble humans to a great extent in many ways; not based on the fact that they are unique and different, but on the idea that they are similar to us (*Animal Rites* 192). This, according to Wolfe, merely reinforces the “ethical humanism” that is the problem initially: “Now it’s not humans versus great apes, it’s humans and great apes – the ‘like us’ crowd – versus everyone else” (ibid.). Similarly, in the end of *Animal Farm*, it is not the humans versus nonhuman animals, as it was in the beginning, but humans and pigs versus the other animals.

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine different ways in which *Animal Farm* addresses the animal question and if the novel contains views that support or criticize the idea of animal equality.

The posthumanist theory offers excellent means to discuss the problems that are posed in the novel, in the way the narration portrays the animals as well as how the animal characters see themselves and each other.

The novel gives some clear examples of mistreatment of animals that do not require excessive interpretation but can be read as a direct commentary of the position of animals in our society. It quite accurately states that humans are responsible for the discomfort of nonhuman beings and that something must be done to change the situation so that the wellbeing of animals can be attended. In earlier studies these problems have been interpreted to represent the problems of people living in a totalitarian society – mainly the Soviet Union. However, these interpretations demonstrate that the attitude towards animals in captivity is quite disturbing: while oppression of humans is understandably non-acceptable, the oppression of animals is considered to be somehow normal – a *natural* state of affairs.

As mentioned in the introduction, the animals' rebellion in *Animal Farm* creates a platform for a kind of posthumanist experiment. The animals "remove man from the scene," creating a world without humans where all species start off as equals, with the right and possibility for a fulfilling and dignified life. The experiment fails because Animalism and its initially well-meaning principles are ultimately biased towards certain species, and in this respect they resemble the humanist animal rights theories. By indicating that the problems of speciesism only reoccur unless the discourse of the species is changed, *Animal Farm* can be seen to criticize those humanist theories and their inability to bring about change because of their commitment to the same species discourse that partly causes the initial problem.

In earlier research, language has been acknowledged as a significant theme in the novel, and its significance is apparent in relation to the animal question as well. Both as a means of power and an indicator of intelligence, language is utilized by the pigs to gain a privileged position in the farm community, much like humans have gained in relation to other

species. The characters also partake in speciesist discourse and ideas throughout the novel. This can be seen in the relationship of the humans and nonhuman animals as well as in the relationship of the pigs and the other farm animals. The less intelligent species continue to be exploited even after the humans are banished from the farm, as the pigs assume the position of the superior species. Thus, the humanist approach that speciesism is a part of only helps some species while repeating the problems for others. These relationships are presented in such a way that the reader sees the problem of inequality in them. Therefore the novel is ultimately critical of speciesism.

The novel also addresses essentialism and the ideas of what is *natural* and what is *human*, which are very important for animal equality, or lack thereof. In real life, humans base their morals on those very ideas in order to dominate other beings through speciesism. By suggesting that certain abilities and attributes are essentially human, the novel constantly comments on the binary opposition of human/animal. The pigs, who possess the most human attributes, place themselves in a higher position than the other animals because of those attributes. As the reader is ultimately left to sympathize with the animals on the outside – species other than pigs, dogs, and humans – the novel suggests that as long as the human/animal opposition is not deconstructed, the initial problem of inequality between species will remain the same.

Although there are often political and economic constraints that affect animal issues, meaning that major changes in animal equality require changes in legislation as well, it does not dismiss the importance of changing the perspectives of individual readers or consumers, since the individuals have the power to influence the legislation and the industry regarding animals. Similarly, individual readers may change the way animal literature is interpreted in the future. Because the species discourse and the binary opposition of human/animal is constructed rather than natural, they can be deconstructed and changed accordingly. A

posthumanist reading of *Animal Farm* shows that the issue of animal equality is a prevalent theme of the novel, and the story presents various ideas that are very critical towards the mistreatment of animals. However, unless the reader is able to be critical towards the species discourse in the novel and recognize the issues that the text proposes, there is a risk that the important observations that the text does about the animal question will be lost.

Further research is of course needed, not only on *Animal Farm*, but on the vast scope of animal literature in general. Because the field of animal studies and posthumanist literary theory are still developing, it is difficult to say what the status of animals in literature will be even in the near future. Hopefully this thesis encourages other researchers to address animal issues in their work, as well as challenge readers to keep the animal question in mind even when reading classic pieces of literature with generally accepted meanings. A change in the general mindset of humans is of course an ultimate goal that could have an impact on the way we actually treat nonhuman beings in our society and in our daily lives. Unfortunately, as Timothy Clark points out, “a basic ‘speciesism’ is so fundamental and all-pervasive that it is still hard to imagine what society would be like without it” (190).



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